

# The LENINIST

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## 19th Conference and the Ten Theses

**T**HE COMMUNIST Party of the Soviet Union holds its 19th Conference – the first for 47 years – starting on June 28. The issues facing the conference are “of vital significance for the party and the country” says its Central Committee in the introduction to its ten theses of perestroika, published as a “discussion document”.

There can be no doubt that the 19th Conference will mark an important watershed in the political life of the USSR. It would, of course, be pointless to speculate on its outcome. We do not pretend to know whether or not Gorbachev will get everything he wants, or whether those around Yegor Ligachev will succeed in staging some sort of ‘palace coup’.

The Ten Theses contain compromises, they are not pure Gorbachevism. Nevertheless, they represent an attempt to consolidate and advance the political platform of the technocratic wing of the CPSU. It is therefore crucial for genuine communists, those who oppose the revisionism of Gorbachev, to critically study developments in the CPSU and examine what is at stake at the conference and its possible consequences. This can be best done if we deal with the Ten Theses one by one.

### Thesis 1. Ideology.

“Perestroika has radically changed the ideological and political situation – a revolution in people’s thinking is taking place and a real pluralism of opinions, open comparison of ideas and interests is appearing” says Thesis 1. “The most important result of the first three years of perestroika is the uniting of all social forces under its banner. But survivals of the conservative and bureaucratic mentality have been tenacious and adherents of dogmatic concepts of socialism are slow to yield. They must be overcome if perestroika is to succeed.”

True the Soviet Union is a different place today than under Brezhnev. In the last few years there have been dramatic changes. But opposition does not only come from “survivals of the conservative and bureaucratic mentality”. A large section of the Soviet population – not least the working class – is wary of what perestroika will bring, and quite rightly.

This has yet to find coherent ideological expression, popular opposition to perestroika is not the main political feature of political life in the USSR. Yet pressure from below has been used by a section of the labour bureaucracy in the USSR to oppose Gorbachev, or at least oppose the ‘excesses’ of perestroika.

It is clear that references to “survivals of the conservative and bureaucratic mentality” is a reference to both the middle layers of the bureaucracy which is one of the prime targets of Gorbachev’s reforms, attacks on waste, corruption etc and also the split that has opened up at the top of the CPSU.

The ‘Ligachev group’ – which according to *The Economist* includes at least four members of the

Politburo: Lev Zaikov, a member of the Secretariat, Viktor Chebrikov head of the KGB, Mikhail Solomentsev and President Andrei Gromyko – is said to have been behind the ‘conservative manifesto’ which appeared in *Sovetskaya Rossia* in March. In a sense this marked the beginning of the 19th Conference.

The ‘Ligachev group’ is deeply concerned that Gorbachev has gone too far. They fear that he has opened a Pandora’s Box of political and social forces which cannot be controlled.

In the ideological field this group is not in favour of an open admission of the crimes of the past. If all those “who paid an unjust and illegal price in the past” are rehabilitated will not the legitimacy of the entire regime be brought into question? And if official Soviet history is to be rejected as being merely a collection of lies, half truths and evasions what is to be put in its place? If the bureaucracy is to remain the master of society it can only be a new set of lies, half truths and evasions, whatever Gorbachev says it has no interest in truth.

The ‘Ligachev group’ is certainly correct in its claim that glasnost has set in motion political forces which have led to unprecedented convulsions in Soviet society. Gorbachev’s “revolution from above”, his “revolution without shots” has unleashed previously pent up socio/political forces which will not easily be reigned back in; a CPSU dominated by the bureaucracy is incapable of achieving ideological hegemony through democratic means.

The fact that differences exist at the top has provided fissures through which popular discontent has found expression and no Central Committee calls for “discussions” not to lead to “political confrontation”, to “disunity of social forces” and for them to be “on the basis and in the name of socialism” will close the floodgates

### Thesis 2. Economics.

It is claimed that “the country has stepped back from the economic crisis that had faced it after years of stagnation”. Frankly, the improvement in the economy is marginal. Growth rates remain sluggish and the rate of return have shown no discernible improvement. This shows that bureaucratic socialism has exhausted all the possibilities inherent in it.

The Central Committee’s main answer to this endemic tendency of bureaucratic socialism towards stagnation – which has seen growth rates slide from 20% in the ‘30s to 3% today – is to strengthen the forces of capitalism: as socialism is a transitional society and not a definite mode of production, capitalist features (commodity production, the law of value and money) as well as communist elements (the plan, social ownership and production) both exist side-by-side in the USSR. That the bureaucracy is looking to the market not the plan as the way forward shows that its rule has become reactionary. Bureaucratic management, bureaucratic rule

was never progressive but now it has become an absolute fetter on the development of the productive forces.

This contradiction between the social production and ownership of the means of production and bureaucratic rule cannot be resolved through Gorbachev’s perestroika and the so-called New Economic Mechanism.

The ‘Ligachev group’ does not seem to have a different economic platform but in response to pressure from below it has insisted that the Soviet version of ‘market socialism’ develop “without detriment to the living standards of the population”. On the evidence of Yugoslavia, China and Hungary the reverse will happen.

### Thesis 3. Science and Technology.

“Socialism cannot develop successfully without advancement in science and technology” says the Central Committee. Yet it is clear that while Soviet scientists are among the world’s best and while the Soviet Union has scientists and technologists in large numbers bureaucratic rule has meant that Soviet industry and agriculture remain in world terms backward.

The fundamental problem in the USSR is not to be found in a failure to advance science and technology but the bureaucracy’s inability to apply this to production. The truth is that advances in science and technology cannot be applied and socialism advanced while the bureaucracy remains the master and not the servant of society.

### Thesis 4. Democracy.

Developments so far are only “a prelude” to the “profound and all-round democratisation of the party and society.” What is being proposed are measures like having two carefully selected candidates in elections instead of one, creating full time parliamentarians and abolishing open censorship. This ‘non-class democracy’ is reminiscent of bourgeois democracy, it is bureaucratic ‘democracy’.

Such ‘democracy’ has been used by Gorbachev to win the support of the intelligentsia. This does not alter our view that Gorbachev’s ‘democracy’ is little more than a sop. Genuine socialist democracy – as outlined in Lenin’s *State and Revolution* – would mean subjecting all officials (including Communist Party functionaries) to recall, paying them no more than the average skilled wage, arming the working people and taking measures to replace the permanent bureaucracy with the self rule of the population. Above all, today it means abolishing the one-party system. Without the plurality of parties there can be no ‘socialist pluralism’.

This is because under socialism there are different class and strata there are social contradictions which should find political expression in the form of parties.

Gorbachev could never stand on such a platform because it would undermine both wings of the bureaucracy. His vision of democracy

is classic revisionism. In Thesis 3 democracy is not treated as a class question – in fact the proletariat’s class struggle for communism under socialism is not mentioned.

Gorbachev is betraying communism not introducing socialist democracy. Socialist democracy cannot be handed down by a bureaucratic technocracy – and that is what Gorbachev represents – it can only come from below. Nevertheless although the ‘democracy’ being advocated by the Gorbachevites is like democracy under capitalism – a sham – it cannot be denied that there is a yearning for democracy from the masses.

At this stage it is bound to be the case that politics from below has negative as well as positive features. Even positive developments often bear the marks of having recently emerged from the bureaucratic womb.

As to the negative features it has been strongly rumoured that the Great Russian chauvinist *Pamyet* has powerful backers in the bureaucracy. Likewise it is highly unlikely that demonstrations of a million strong in Armenia over Nagorno Karabakh could have been organised without leading sections of the bureaucracy turning a blind eye or even giving behind the scenes help.

But whatever the case it is clear that such manifestations from below have developed their own momentum, have gone beyond the bounds of being pawns in the inner-bureaucratic struggle. That the new party leader in Armenia has said he favours the reincorporation of Nagorno Karabakh shows that splits in the bureaucracy are being intensified by pressure from below.

### Thesis 5. The party.

This thesis contains proposals for shaking up the CPSU and Gorbachevising it. For example when choosing candidates party members should be elected on the basis of “one’s political authority and one’s active stance in advancing perestroika.”

### Thesis 6. The soviets.

Gorbachev is determined to strengthen the powers of local soviets. This will facilitate the decentralisation of day-to-day decision making. Rules are being proposed to limit the tenure of office holders to two terms and it is being suggested that the Supreme Soviet should become more like a parliament than a rubber stamp body. We say soviet power can never be real until the working population is free to elect whatever soviet party it chooses into power.

### Thesis 7. Nationalities.

“The brilliant result of the Leninist nationalities policy over the 70 Soviet years are evident to all” says Thesis 7. “Inter-ethnic issues must be settled on the basis of genuine democracy, in the spirit of perestroika.”

It is clear that the events in Armenia are the tip of an iceberg. Bureaucratic rule has not solved the problems of national antagonism. If anything it acts with the arrogance of Great Russian chau-

vinism in its handling of differences.

We say nationalism can only be overcome through allowing the full flowering of national culture. We are not against the redrawing of boundaries nor the free movement of people. National rights, including the right to secede, must be respected.

### Thesis 8. The law.

The principle the Central Committee is advocating is: “Everything is permissible unless prohibited by the law.” Bureaucratic arbitrariness is not in the interests of the technocracy.

### Thesis 9. Public organisations.

The Central Committee want to see existing public organisations, such as the trade unions and the Young Communist League, to be joined by new organisations in order to strengthen the forces supporting perestroika.

### Thesis 10. Peace and foreign policy.

The question of peace is now officially a non-class question. Soviet foreign policy with its ‘New Political Thinking’ is designed to preserve the status quo in the world and make peaceful co-existence permanent. For those who see the future in the World Union of Socialist States this is treachery.

Gorbachev’s internal reforms have nothing to do with fighting for communism. As can be seen by his willingness to do a deal with imperialism over ‘hot spots’ like Nicaragua, South Africa, Angola, Kampuchea and of course Afghanistan, he is prepared to betray the gains of socialism.

The domination of opportunism in the USSR – the world’s revolutionary centre – faces the socialist world with the danger of disintegration from within and also at its weakest-links, at its periphery.

We are living through a period full of dangers but also great possibilities. History poses two great alternatives: capitalism and war or revolution and communism. It is either one or the other. There is no permanent peaceful co-existence middle course.

This is not immediately apparent. We have after all recently seen Gorbachev and Reagan sign the finalised INF treaty in Moscow. This has been greeted by many as a ‘historic step towards peace’.

Those trained in the school of Marxism-Leninism are not deceived by all the media hype. While imperialism exists there exists the danger of war.

Thesis 10 says the Central Committee has not cast “aside the militaristic danger which lurks in the essence of imperialism” ... but it suggests that “law, human morality and fulfilment of international obligations” is becoming of more important than the arms, let alone the (unmentioned) class struggle of the working class.

This is pacifist sophistry. The only future that can guarantee peace and progress is the future of world revolution.

David Sherriff





Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:  
for a genuine Communist Party

THE GOVERNMENT has launched a sustained PR campaign in order to prepare the population – not least the bourgeoisie – for 1992. On December 31 1992 the European Community will complete its transition to a single internal market, which is supposed to make Western Europe a truly 'common market' in which commodities and profits will move as easily between its 12 member states as they now move between the fifty states of the USA.

What we will see in 1992 is the qualitative step in the development of an imperialist bloc which has, in the words of Thatcher, the potential to "make this side of the Atlantic a power in the world equal to the size of any other power and, according to how we use the opportunities, possibly even greater." In other words Western European imperialism – which Thatcher dreams of Britain leading – can surpass Japan and even challenge the now fragile hegemony the US exercises over the capitalist world.

Japan is blamed for the decline of traditional industries in Europe and the US. It is also often painted as the economic superpower of the late 20th century which will become the military/political superpower of the 21st. In reality, Japan is only able to out-compete the US in areas as diverse as autos, ships and chips because the US allows it to.

The US is still committed to the open world capitalist market it created in the aftermath of its victory in World War II. An open market has its costs but on balance it continues to serve the interests of US finance capital. Because of this neither Democrats nor Republicans countenance a return to the isolationism of the 1930s and the president continues to at least temper protectionist bills coming from Congress.

In a no-holds barred economic battle Japan would be crushed. The US might be a declining power but it must never be forgotten that this decline is relative; the US remains overwhelmingly the strongest national economy in the world today, with a GNP twice that of Japan's. Because of this when it comes to the crunch Japan bows before demands for 'restraint', ie for the imposition of quotas on its exports into the US market.

An integrated EC would be a different matter. It has a population, a GNP and a market on a par with the US. It could compete on its own terms, not those of the US.

The significance of Western European integration is not only that it is organising itself against Japan and the US, but that the forces of production render national frontiers ever more obsolete. The left reformists' response to this is revealing. As epitomised by the *Morning Star*, *Tribune* and *7 Days*, it looks to the past and a defence of the 'sovereignty of parliament', not to the future.

Parliament, they imagine, is the institution through which will be constructed the socialist order. Its rights must be jealously guarded. In the meantime the left reformists tell British imperialism that it is against its interests to remain in the EC – better go it alone, they say.

All of this is reactionary. Workers will find their liberation in the future, not the past. Certainly genuine workers' organisations should not act as advisors to the bourgeoisie. Socialism will come through revolution and the creation of a British 'Supreme Soviet' not the bourgeois parliament. The fact that under capitalism national frontiers constitute a barrier to the development of the productive forces underlines the need – not for a united capitalist Europe – but for the World Union of Socialist Republics.

Against the left reformists' nationalism, communists counterpose proletarian internationalism. If the bourgeoisie is organising itself across the national frontiers of Europe, then communists should organise themselves across the national frontiers of the entire world. We need more internationalism not less.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### DAM Lies

We are writing to inform your readers that the letter which appeared in *The Leninist* No 64 purporting to be from the SW London DAM is a forgery, a forgery involving distortions and downright lies.

Your paper has, it is obvious, a policy of printing all letters received and it is hardly your fault if someone sends you a fake (which was also sent to the anarchist paper *Freedom*, who had the good sense to suspect it and not print it). However, we think you must be held responsible for publishing a letter which makes serious allegations against our organisation, of use to no one other than the security services.

Over the years *The Leninist* has made the question of revolutionary security a point of principle (casting, for example, those CCGers who attempted to fit Leninist names to pseudonyms at a public meeting). But perhaps this principle only applies to yourselves and other state socialists and not to anarcho-syndicalist organisations like the DAM.

Stalinists and Trotskyites have a long and disgraceful record of fingering anarchists and other revolutionaries for the state – is your organisation any different from them?

Direct Action Movement – International Workers Association

### Utter Crap

I read a recent edition of *The Leninist* for the first time in many years. These years seem to have changed nothing, it is still utter crap. At least you are consistent if nothing else.

Glasnost!  
Mel Danvers  
Kent

David Sherriff replies:

Now that the Kent District Secretary of the CPGB has written to *The Leninist*, it is clear that the ban on writing to our paper and selling it imposed by the CPGB Executive Committee no longer operates. Glasnost reigns in the CPGB at last. All members of the CPGB should take their cue from Danvers – openly write to and sell *The Leninist*.

### Irish 'Iskra'

I've been an avid reader of *The Leninist* since I first saw it (about 1½ years ago), and also the literature of *Isclan Sesl*. I am impressed by the theoretical clarity of your paper and I'm confident that it will grow from strength to strength.

In Ireland we tend to be somewhat insular in our outlook and caught up in our own 'Troubles' (to coin a popular media euphemism), often to the detriment of internationalism. Therefore, while we need to build Ireland's *Iskra*, we must also recognise that the British working class need to build their *Iskra*. Judging by what I've seen of other British publications, *The Leninist* is certainly a 'diamond in the rough', and as the crises in Britain become more pronounced (as is already happening) I'm sure *The Leninist* will fulfill the role of Britain's *Iskra*.

Many people here see the British left as being nothing more than a collection of polemical sects organised around obscure little 'lefty'

papers and largely divorced from any actual struggle. While this may apply to most, alas, I've heard this accusation leveled against yourselves by some Sinn Fein types in here. Their problem could be said to be the opposite of what they accuse you of, in that they are so caught up in the action-reaction cycle that not enough attention is given to achieving ideological/theoretical clarity and unity within their own ranks.

Could you please send me, and the rest of my IRSP comrades in here, the literature on the Unemployed Workers Charter, so that we'd all have it to study and to take with us throughout the prison and propagate. It is an excellent example of 'on the streets' struggle and 'action in the here and now' for which the Leninists are to be commended and which clearly sets you apart from the polemical sects.

As the UWC has no equivalent over here, I intend suggesting a similar campaign to my own party. It doesn't have to detract from their own party building and restructuring and would in fact enhance that.

In a letter on the NHS crisis which, typically, wasn't printed by any of the papers it was sent to, I touched on the possibility of mobilising unemployed workers to demonstrate with/on behalf of NHS staff who were caught in the moral dilemma a strike would have posed. While the main reason for mobilising the unemployed would be to demand jobs, abolish slave labour schemes, etc.

I thought it pitiful to see on TV the small little demonstrations the nurses were left to stage on their own during their breaks and felt the unemployed workers could be mobilised (along with other workers, of course) to swell the ranks of these demonstrations and give solidarity and moral to the nurses.

Pat McPhillips  
H-Blocks, Long Kesh

### The Irish Struggle

Copies 58, 61 and 62 [of *The Leninist*] have been held by the authorities. One issue has been banned – supportive of violence is the reason given – and the other two are still awaiting trial.

It makes it very difficult for me to contribute letters to a paper I am unable to read. In the meantime, though, let me comment on two major points. First, is the question of armed struggle. Tactics flow from the objective situation, you rightly say, and for this very reason we refuse to endorse the conduct of the present campaign of physical force.

There is a revolutionary situation in parts of the Six Counties, but this can't be said to exist throughout most of the country. As a consequence of this and having stated the all-Ireland nature of the problem, we maintain that active support for armed struggle is confined to a diminishing minority within either the working class or petty bourgeoisie. This, too, will continue to be so in the absence of a mass movement both sides of the border.

Encouraging people to persist with a physical force campaign, under these conditions of limited support, is a very questionable proposition. If the campaign is incapable of dislodging the British (admitted by the republican leadership), what purpose exactly is it meant to serve? Are we to subscribe to the "violence agent of

destabilisation theory" or "violence as an exciting agent theory"? Surely this isn't Marxism.

Now, once more on the Congress. What faces us today in Ireland is the practical task of building a revolutionary vanguard party. The question is how. There are at least a dozen circles or groups in this country claiming to be involved in this work, none of whom are making an impact. Will another pretentious claim fare any better? Workers in general are indifferent or even bemused by all these tiny aspirants to the title.

Action based around the demands of a radical programme is one way to break this inertia. One strike is worth a thousand pamphlets, Lenin once said. The Congress concept is not something cast in tablets of stone. It requires debate and discussion, consultations and preparation before any formal commitments are made. Even then there may be, indeed probably will be, diverse positions. Such is life. The realignment will bring forth a stronger stream.

Control of such a stream comes only through ideological hegemony. Otherwise one talks of numerical domination. Ideological hegemony is gained, not by numbers but by the strength of a message. To have the opportunity to impart this message we must first have unity around a basic programme.

Tommy McKearney  
H Blocks, Long Kesh

### Slip

Sean Quinn's article on the Clause (*The Leninist* No 63) comes at a very timely point in the class struggle, with the Labourite left in full scale retreat, and even those wacky petty bourgeois-ites, the RCP, beginning to show symptoms of the 'downturn' blues, a crippling illness which has left its parent body, the SWP, politically bed ridden.

Whilst Sean Quinn's article provides a clear fighting communist strategy to beat back the ruling class' attack on gay and lesbian rights, the article does however appear to make an inexcusable slip.

In his attack upon the *Morning Star* (CPB) Quinn quite rightly attacks these economists for bowing to 'popular' prejudices, by steering clear of the issue of the Clause altogether. But to state (whether in jest or not!), that this is " ... understandable when one considers the 'straight as a die' mentality of their readers and supporters, most of whom are anyway a little past the worries of the 'pleasure of the flesh' ...", is itself bowing to 'popular' prejudices.

Gay and lesbian relationships are no more or no less relationships which entail the 'pleasures of the flesh'. Let us therefore make sure that the fightback does not take as its starting point the bigots' caricatures of gay and lesbian relationships as nothing more than 'downright sex'.

Mike Harrington  
Kent

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.



# Fightback with the UWC

**Willis says that to boycott the slave labour ETP is to abandon the unemployed, but anyone who has ever worked on one of the government's 'training schemes' will be in no doubt who the real traitors are**



Theory into practice

**T**HIS SEPTEMBER the Unemployed Workers Charter – sponsored by *The Leninist* – has called for a lobby of the TUC on the opening day of its annual congress in Bournemouth. This day has more significance than just being the first day of the TUC. Our lobby is to protest against the capitulation of the TUC's 19 to 14 capitulation to the Tories' work-for-dole Employment Training Programme (see the enclosed edition of *Unemployed Organiser*) which is due to be launched on that very day, September 5.

Without the TUC's cooperation the ETP would collapse. No unemployed worker would regret this. ETP is being used by capitalism to attack the rights and living standards of the unemployed. In common with sections of the oppressed, such as women, blacks and homosexuals, the Tories have focused in on the unemployed as part of their offensive to divide the working class and turn it in on itself.

The TUC's cooperation with ETP has not been seriously challenged by the organisations of the revolutionary left – the unemployed sorely feel the lack of a genuine Communist Party. Thatcher has managed to attack the unemployed in a way not seen since the 1930s. And she has done so with consummate ease. Today there is no National Union of Unemployed Workers which led the fightback in the 1920s and 30s. The UWC is dedicated to change this situation.

Norman Willis may say that to walk away from this slave labour schemes is somehow to abandon the unemployed, but anyone who has ever worked on one of the bloody things will be in no doubt who the real traitors are.

Ron Todd and other 'dissidents' have called for a boycott of the ETP. Yet the TGWU, Nupe and Nalco on past record are better at hot air than action. While we support their refusal to cooperate with the ETP 'workfare', we can afford no illusions in the ability of bureaucrats of Todd's ilk to lead an effective fightback.

No one – not least the three million plus unemployed – believe in the so-called 'training' the government is offering, no matter how pretty the packaging. This does not only effect the unemployed. Marx once said that it was

not the ninety workers inside the factory gates which dictated their wages, but the ten unemployed standing outside.

ETP allows the ten unemployed to be brought *inside* the factory gates, for dole level 'wages'. This can only but lead to a squeeze on the wages of the employed workers, more threats of sackings and further divide and rule divisions in our ranks.

The fact that Todd and others in the trade union bureaucracy, along with various community organisations and so on, have come out against ETP/workfare, indicates that there is a groundswell of revulsion to this scheme. Clearly the objective basis exists *now* to begin to mobilise on this question, around a militant class conscious minority of employed and unemployed workers.

In such a situation we should be witnessing a hive of activity from the left. But no; there is a dearth of activity, not only from the leaders of the labour movement, but also from the 'left' opposition to them. The CPGB has actually voted *down* resolutions calling for the organisation of the unemployed.

Others like the CPB talk about the need for organising the unemployed – but leave it there. Thank goodness for small mercies. For 'official' communism, organising the unemployed is envisaged in the most bureaucratic, dead-headed way possible, chaining them to the dead-end politics of the labour movement bureaucracy.

One group that a decade ago you would have expected the most positive reaction to these attacks is the SWP. In the '70s we saw them running around, promoting the 'Right to Work' campaign. But now, with unemployment a good four times higher, with this being used as an 'in' to attack the whole of the working class, the SWP are doing *nothing at all!*

The 'downturn' theory has transformed these congenial economists into something which bears a closer resemblance to a 19th century propaganda sect than the active organisation it used to be in the 1970s. Then recruits came easy. Its present orientation has produced a deep conservatism in the ranks of the SWP: organising meetings titled "Can workers beat the Tories?", rather than "Workers can beat the Tories!". It has also produced an important block to proposed strikes, demon-

strations and mass actions. The 'downturn' has become a self fulfilling prophecy.

A vacuum exists – a vacuum that will not be spontaneously filled. But it must be filled – through the active intervention of communists – if the working class are not to face another, significant defeat.

That is why *The Leninist* launched the UWC in the first place; to campaign for the organisation of the unemployed and to lead a fightback unshackled from bourgeois influence; to raise the plight of the unemployed in a revolutionary way and take it to the heart of the workers' movement.

Our practical, communist, solutions to the crisis in our movement flows from our recognition that theory without practice is sterile. Our struggle needs to be lifted from the theoretical to the political. Without this approach the forging of a genuine Communist Party and the struggle of revolution will become mere abstract dogma, not living reality.

The necessity of practice was a question which we had to fight hard to win within our own ranks. Looking at our still small numbers and our always overstretched organisation, some comrades thought we were over ambitious in launching a lobby of the TUC. The Extended Editorial Board meeting of *The Leninist* which met in late May decisively rejected this view, which was characterised as opportunist. It represents a *political* problem which has to be overcome.

Our organisation firmly stands against those who merely pontificate against the 'evil' attacks of the Tories on the unemployed. We will never sit back and demand from armchairs that the TUC or Labour leaders do this, or do that. This will change nothing.

*The Leninist* has always stressed the importance of relating its theory to revolutionary practice. In the UWC, the focal point for this will be the lobby of the TUC in September. You should not only be there, but fight for others to be there, taking the anti-capitalist proletarian approach to unemployed organisation to as many in the workers' movement as possible. You know the address; you know the arguments – so get to it!

David Rhys

Secretary of the UWC

With McCluskie in the lead there is a real danger that struggle against P&O will be channelled into a 'commercial war' cul-de-sac and a PR campaign about 'safety levels' on P&O's ferries. The rank and file of the National Union of Seamen must not allow this to happen. What is needed is an all out strike by all NUS members along with a concerted drive to bring out other sections of the working class in solidarity with the NUS and against the Tories anti-trade union laws. If this is done, workers in France and Belgium will be won to stop all sailings to Britain. But in contrast to what is needed, the Kinnockite McCluskie has been reduced to posture and bluff. His 'commercial war' against P&O will never beat Sterling ... and it plays directly into the hands of Sherwood and his Sealink who with the Channel Tunnel are just waiting to do a P&O and cut crew levels to the bone. A 'commercial war' against P&O will not make Sterling 'see sense' and it will not win active solidarity from other workers. It can only lead to defeat. The battle against P&O must not become a Wapping on Water. What is needed is a new leadership, a leadership which is not tied to operating within capitalism but which fights for socialism. Under capitalism workers' jobs will always be under threat and safety can only be ensured under workers' control. Capitalists can never be trusted with our jobs, let alone our lives. Support the march on P&O's headquarters called by London support groups. June 29, 12 noon at Hyde Park Corner.

Over 100 people attended the Justice for Kitson Conference in London on May 21.

David Kitson was jailed for 20 years by the apartheid regime for his role in the founding and leadership of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC. While he was imprisoned, his union Tass (now MSF) undertook to fund a job for him at Ruskin College, Oxford upon his release to help him 'build a new life'. David and Norma Kitson were suspended from the ANC in 1984 because he refused to denounce the actions of the active City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. His trade union, headed by *Morning Star* supporter, Ken Gill, used this as a pretext to withdraw his job funding. The conference deplored the actions of the Tass leadership as "a product of political sectarianism" and called on the new MSF organisation to fulfil the guarantees originally made to David and his family. A steering committee was agreed, including a representative of *The Leninist*, to take the campaign into the working class movement, the student and academic community, the Labour Party and so on. The campaign can be contacted either via *The Leninist* or direct through the Ruskin College Kitson/Mandela Committee, Ruskin Hall, Headington, Oxford.



•David Kitson: freedom fighter and working class partisan. Promises made should be promises kept

Eric Hammond claims that if expelled from the TUC, the EETPU would not launch a rival trade union centre, or poach members from TUC-affiliated unions. If true this is good. It reflects Hammond's lack of success in winning support from non-TUC unions to form a 'Modern Union Congress'. It is a sign of weakness. Militants cannot afford to be complacent, however. At least part of the reason for Hammond's *blase* approach is the fact that he believes that things are going his way in the trade union movement in general. All the EETPU has to do, he suggests, is wait for 'New Realism' to fully work its way through the TUC and then rejoin the new 'EETPUised' TUC. Given the continued retreat of the labour movement bureaucracy, he has a point. Communists can ensure this does not happen by organising a powerful rank and file fightback. In particular communists in the EETPU must win the rank and file to stay in and win it to rejoin the TUC as a militant union. Just leaving plays into Hammond's hands and can only strengthen the right in the TUC.

## At Full Stretch



With our Fifth Summer Offensive now in full swing, the resources of the organisation are at full stretch. The funds that we raise in the course of our campaigns are not used for the day to day running of the organisation: they are set aside for plans which develop our organisation rather than simply keep it ticking over. Our readers and sympathisers are therefore needed to fill the breach and ensure that *The Leninist's* coffers are kept topped up. This, so far, comrades have failed to do. Our regular £600 fund for May tailed off badly towards the end and finished £100 down. June's total has also started off very sluggishly. Comrades, we need you to double your regular donations at least! So come on, let's here your money talk solidarity!



# Summer Offensive '88

**T**HIS year's Summer Offensive, the Fifth our organisation has staged, is the most ambitious we have ever attempted: we are aiming to raise over £10,000. We are ambitious not simply because we have more comrades than ever before, or because we are now able to draw on the experience of our four previous campaigns in order to avoid the shortcomings and weaknesses. No, our target has been set at a record level because this is what is necessary to fulfill our communist tasks.

The class struggle necessitates the forging of a genuine Communist Party. Without such a party the working class will never be able to secure any permanent advance. A genuine Communist Party will only be built through the highest levels of commitment and self sacrifice, a living example of which is *The Leninist's* Summer Offensive.

The basic framework of our Summer Offensive this year remains the same. From June 1 to the last day of July, Leninist comrades, both employed and unemployed, will raise a set minimum for the organisation and many will achieve results well above the minimum.

In previous years our Summer Offensives were something of a long haul. This year, we started things with a bang, £1,255 was collected on the first day. Instead of getting all donations in at the end of the Offensive we are out to encourage socialist competition among our comrades. In this way we hope to build the Summer Offensive, give it a momentum it has lacked in the past. This will also mean that comrades will significantly surpass their targets.

The launch meeting of the Fifth Summer Offensive, held in London, began with a speech by Jack Conrad (see supplement) and after it comrades pledged donations which add up to over £10,000. For an organisation of our size this is splendid. It is a taste of things to come.

We are sure that the spirit generated and the examples of communist self sacrifice and initiative at this meeting lifted comrades' pledges and won some who might not have otherwise participated to take the plunge. The average target for comrades participating fully in the Offensive this year is well over £100 more than the average raised last year by comrades.

This expresses both the growing political maturity and commitment of the Leninist core comrades, most of whom are veterans of previous campaigns and are now skilled at squeezing blood from stones. It is also due to the fact that the sea of sympathy that *The Leninist* swims in is much larger than in the past. We are determined to reach out to comrades around our organisation, to turn outwards more in our drive to raise funds.

If we are successful in this we are confident that comrades will smash through their targets. Also our sympathisers who, for one reason or another, feel they cannot participate fully in the Summer Offensive will learn how to raise money through self sacrifice and going outwards.

The evolution of the Summer Offensive parallels the development of *The Leninist* as a com-



Defending class politics is not a part time job

**The first day of 'The Leninist's' Fifth Summer Offensive saw £1,255 raised and comrades pledged donations which add up to over £10,000. For an organisation of our size this is splendid. It is a taste of things to come**

munist organisation. When we first raised the banner of revolutionary revolt in the ranks of the Communist Party in November 1981 with *The Leninist* No 1, our organisation consisted of nothing more than a group of four comrades: a head with no body.

The comrades had little or no detailed knowledge of the 'audience' they were addressing nor the response they were likely to get. In spite of this, they had to raise the money in order to set presses rolling on *The Leninist* No 1 (over £1,000). Faced with such a task, many would simply have packed up and gone home. The asset that our comrades did have, however, was Leninist politics.

We start not from what is 'possible' but from what is necessary: we then make what is necessary possible.

In the very early days of *The Leninist*, the financial sacrifices and money-raising drives were confined to our very closest comrades. It was simply a matter of putting hands in pockets. With the Second Conference of Leninist supporters in August 1984, the tasks then facing our organisation demanded that we both raised our levels of self sacrifice and involved

more supporters and sympathisers in active financing of the paper. We had to institutionalise fund raising.

It was decided to take on board one of the lessons our comrades from Turkey's work had provided and launch a Summer Offensive. As a kind of 'dry run', Conference participants launched a mini-Offensive from late Summer '84 to the Autumn (which goes down in our history as the *First* Summer Offensive). The first full Summer Offensive began on May Day 1985. The minimum agreed target for this first full Offensive was three weeks wages for employed comrades and two weeks income for the unemployed or students.

A feature of these early campaigns was obviously widespread disparities between comrades' targets. In the period when comrades raised the money almost exclusively by tightening their own belts, this was inevitable and correct. A development was introduced into the Fourth Summer Offensive of 1987. A basic minimum was levied for all comrades, employed and unemployed alike, participating in the campaign.

Like all our Offensives, this Fourth campaign acted as a purge

of all that was soft, rotten or pompous in our organisation. This is excellent. We fight to steel our comrades. We are not interested in those who talk a good revolution after a couple of pints. We want comrades who dare unite theory with practice.

So we often see people break from our organisation when it comes to the tasks of the Summer Offensive. Some discover big political differences. Others discover small ones. The result is the same. It excuses them from the fund drive. This does not worry us. We will not lower the demands we place on our comrades. No, we aim to constantly raise them. By purging our organisation we greatly strengthen our organisation.

Nevertheless we do not take a casual attitude to comrades who have doubts. We fight to win them to the political understanding that it is necessary to strive for the highest level of dedication: we will never build a genuine Communist Party which can survive against state attacks unless we embrace this Leninist principle.

Recently one sympathiser wrote to us saying 'I don't quite feel a fully partisan Leninist ... If you

feel strongly that a supporter like myself, who doesn't agree with everything written in the paper, should have a role in the Summer Offensive, then of course I'm open to your views!'

We will use this opportunity to openly answer our friend. In reality, this comrade is not expressing doubts about the political platform of *The Leninist* — he describes the calibre of the few differences he has with the paper as "one or two doubts". Rather, he is feeling daunted by the practical implications of our politics — the hard financial and personal commitment that goes hand in hand with Leninist theory.

Frankly, we say to this comrade and all others who are wary of the Summer Offensive for one reason or another, that the only way they are ever going to overcome their doubts is to jump in with both feet and actually take part! How else can you ever hope to become a "fully partisan Leninist" if not by practice?

The Summer Offensive of *The Leninist* does not simply stand on the shoulders of our comrades from the Communist Party of Turkey — whose annual fund-raising drive topped £100,000 this year — it is also in the tradition of similar campaigns organised to support Karl Marx's newspaper *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848 as well as Lenin's *Iskra*. Indeed, the Bolshevik Party ran the equivalent of the Summer Offensive until the mid 1920s. This is the tradition we look back to. This is the tradition that will carry us towards the revolutionary future.

How this contrasts with the miserable approach of the opportunists! The dismal reformists of the CPB, with their part time general secretary Mike Hicks, promise to produce their 'theoretical' journal every two months next year and on a monthly basis — maybe — sometime, never. The reason for this somewhat less than granite-hard approach? "We haven't got the money, comrades", they whine.

Last year, the Eurocommunist CPGB set a target for its summer appeal of £100,000 and failed to achieve it; this year they set a much more modest goal of raising £80,000 (it raised just over £57,000).

The qualitative difference between the way a Leninist organisation raises money and the lacklustre and the depressingly unsuccessful attempts of opportunists of various hues illustrates the difference in our approach to the question of revolution itself. We take that task seriously; it is a necessity for human social progress and thus we will make it happen.

What remains of the 'official' communist movement in this country has no perception of what a revolution is and how to make it; therefore they are confined to the dismal art of the possible, which at the end of the day, of course, gets practically nothing done.

We urge all readers, all supporters, to take part in the Fifth Summer Offensive of *The Leninist*. Write or phone your pledges through, comrades. Take an investment in the future British revolution! Forward with *The Leninist*!

Alec Long





**1968**

**and the**

**Tasks of**

**Today**



This article is based on the speech made by Jack Conrad to the meeting which launched 'The Leninist's' Fifth Summer Offensive. In his speech the comrade showed us that the year 1968 was a great turning point in history which poses to communists the necessity of building a genuine Communist Party and the forging of a world party of revolution



**C**OMRADES, IT IS hardly surprising that 'official' communists around the world have done nothing to celebrate the events of '68. Indeed they have kept a stoney silence. The *Morning Star* and *The New Worker*, for example, have not carried one article commemorating, let alone analysing, what happened in the France or Italy of '68.

And we can safely say that neither the New Communist Party nor the Communist Party of Britain will be dancing on the grave of the 'Prague Spring' this August; this year the NCP will not — as it did in 1978 — stage a demonstration to the Czech embassy greeting the anniversary of the Soviet led intervention. Apart from not having the numbers, in the light of Gorbachev walking in Dubcek's revisionist footsteps this would not be diplomatic now — and that is the only 'internationalism' these miserable centrists prostitutes understand.

The sealed lips of the NCP and CPB are eloquent testimony to the fact that 'official' communism recognises its own bankruptcy. Looking back to the heady days of '68 it has nothing to be proud of. Its role in '68 was treacherous and the years since have only been years of decline, crisis and the most sickening adaptation to the shifting positions and changing leaderships in Moscow. No wonder, in retrospect, centrism has not attempted to come to grips with the significance of '68.

So reformist has 'official' communism become that the explosion of an unprecedented wave of student anger and workers strikes in 1968 is best ignored. All it can see, all it wants to see, is piece-meal reform through social democracy and peace through deals with imperialism. It has no understanding or vision of revolution. In fact there is very little separating 'official' communism today and Eurocommunism.

Nonetheless, where the centrists of 'official' communism have maintained an embarrassed silence on 1968, the Eurocommunists have at least recognised that *something* happened, and yes, something of importance. Naturally though the Euros have gone out of their way to sanitise '68, make it safe, make it irrelevant to the tasks of today.

*Marxism Today* had a front cover on 1968 and this 'theoretical and discussion journal' of the CPGB sponsored 'The '68 Show'. Although 2,000 were expected, only 400 actually turned up. And no wonder.

The Eurocommunists might be able to trace their divergence with the mainstream of the world communist movement to 1968 but they are a product of the degeneration and disintegration of the world communist movement. Its history is one of fawning retreat, liquidationism and adaption to bourgeoisdom.

The Eurocommunists played no positive role whatsoever in the events of '68. They waved red flags, shouted revolutionary slogans and saluted with clenched fists at 'The '68 Show' in May 1988, not though in May 1968. And in May 1988 this was done as a bit of fun, a piece of pretend, a game; not as a homage to the revolution that failed, a dedication to the revolution to come. For the Eurocommunists the revolutionary events of 1968 were aberrations with no relevance for today. This is not our view.

1968 shows us that the world is heading towards revolution and the world proletarian dictatorship. We do not take as our starting point the 'normal times' of social peace and the day-to-day grind. No, quite the opposite. Our actions are determined by the aim of revolution and our thoughts, judgements and standpoint are moulded by those 'abnormal' moments in time like 1968 which have in fact created the world as we know it.

## Assessing '68

The 10th anniversary of 1968 — the year of the barricades — was nothing like the 20th. Ten years ago no one wanted to bother much with 1968. Today it is the subject of numerous books, TV documentaries and countless articles: at least from every quarter except 'official' communism.

The reason for all the interest today does not lie in some Thatcherite cultural counterrevolution ushering in a new era, as claimed by Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (see *Marxism Today* May 1988). This is self serving Little England revisionism.

Margaret Thatcher's election was not a qualitative development. And in case Jacques and

Hall had not realised it, Thatcher is not prime minister of the world ... and the world must be our point of departure.

And even if there had been some world wide transition to a new historical period between 1968 and 1988 — and there hasn't — this would hardly provoke the interest in 1968 we have seen. The opposite would be the case.

Anyway, the fact of the matter is that there has been no historic rupture between today and 1968. We live in a world wide period that has its genesis in the late 1960s.

This is something even Jacques and Hall inadvertently point to in their joint article: 1968 "marked the dividing line between the long boom" and the stagnation of the 1970s, they say. This is correct, and the stagnant economy is still with us and in the last analysis it has determined the politics of 1980s. What is not correct therefore is their contention that there has been another "dividing line" with the election of Thatcher in 1979.

This has been invented because it enables them and their Euro faction to justify an anti-Thatcherite popular front; it also enables them to make '68 into a safe icon which can be turned into a second rate show bizz event featuring Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques and others in the boring *Marxism Today* clique.

The reason for the silence 10 years after 1968 and all the hoo-ha now is simple. It has nothing to do with a Thatcherite break in socio/historical continuity. It is time.

Revolutionary politics by its very nature attracts elements from the student population who have social origins outside the proletariat. Also by its very nature bourgeois society calls back its own. Being a revolutionary in a non-revolutionary situation is no easy thing. The self sacrifice and austere life style of a revolutionary can easily lose its romance for those brought up in the cradle of middle class comfort. Those from this background who stay committed to the cause of revolution are the exception, not the rule.

In 1978, 1968 was too close, too fresh. Revolutionary practice there was not, but revolutionary pretensions just about remained. In 1988 the individuals who occupied centre stage in Paris, London, Washington and Berlin twenty years before are, with a few honourable exceptions, burnt out or sneering cynics and make no bones about it. Jerry Rubin is no longer a Yippie but a Yuppie. Danny is now not red but green, while Eldridge Cleaver has dumped black power to become a true red, white and blue American.

This is just the stuff for the media to market. Shots of violent demonstrations in 1968 make splendid but safe material when set side by side with interviews with world weary and now 'mature' former leaders.

This has served the interests of the bourgeois establishment well. It has done everything to appear tolerant of the '68 generation, it has done its best to foster the notion that 1968 was youthful madness, "the final farcical coda to two centuries of dangerous fantasy" from the left, (*Times Literary Supplement*) or a strange synchronised fit of pique by pampered baby boom middle class college kids who have since learnt the facts of economic life in the hard school of Thatcherism/Reaganism etc (*The Economist*).

1968 was hardly the dying breath of leftism; before it revolutionary groups in Britain and in most western countries counted their membership in tens. Almost every revolutionary group in the west experienced dramatic growth in numbers and influence in its wake. For example, in 1968 the International Socialists (the forerunners of the SWP) had about 80 members, today they claim some 3-4,000.

Nor were the movements, events and strivings of '68 a consequence of capitalism's success. 1968, for all the petty bourgeois utopianism, naivety and downright silliness, reflected a profound change: the post World War II boom was giving way to a period of pre-crisis, a period of transition, before the advent of a new general crisis of capitalism. This was the historical significance of 1968.

We say it is profoundly stupid to dismiss 1968 as a mere passing youthful phase (even though its politics were for some) as does *Marxism Today*. Lenin emphasised that we must have a "high appraisal of the revolutionary periods in the development of humanity". Genuine Marxists — unlike the theoreticians of Eurocommunism — do not regard these periods as a deviation from the normal path, as manifestations of 'immaturity', as the regrettable result of excesses, but as the most vital, the most important, essen-

tial and decisive moments in the history of human societies.

Equally, it is wrong to liken 1968 to 1917, as many Trotskyites did. It was not so great. If there is a parallel, it is 1848. Like 1848, it was a failure, but nevertheless a historic turning point for all that.

## Historical significance

If we take world history since Marx first expounded his doctrine in 1844 in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, it can be divided into five distinct periods:

- 1. From the revolutions of 1848 to the Paris Commune.** In 1848 revolutions broke out in France, Austria, Germany, Italy and Poland. In Britain the Chartists staged an abortive insurrection, as did the Young Ireland movement in Ireland. In all the revolutions of 1848 the numerous trends of pre-Marxist socialism were exposed as inadequate. This was a period in which revolution was in the air. The working class came to occupy centre stage and the bourgeoisie retreated into the arms of reaction. The formation of the Paris Commune, the first workers' government, in 1871 pitted the proletariat directly against the previously revolutionary bourgeoisie and proved all doctrines of non-class socialism and non-class politics sheer nonsense. After the 1871 Paris Commune, Marxism became the dominant trend in the workers' movement.
- 2. From 1872 to 1904.** This period was distinguished from the first by its 'peaceful' character, by consolidation of the bourgeois order and the absence of revolutions. Although mass workers' parties with Marxist programmes were built, the conditions of social peace encouraged their domination by the forces of opportunism.
- 3. From the 1905 Russian Revolution to the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949.** 1905 was the precursor of a period of wars and socialist revolutions, not only in Europe but also Asia. There were defeats in Germany, Austria, Spain and Greece but at its end a system of socialist states existed which included the world's largest country, the Soviet Union, and its most populous, China.
- 4. From 1950 to 1967.** This was the period of capitalism's long boom and social peace. The socialist countries suffered from suffocating bureaucratic deformations, something encouraged by the halt of the forward march of the world revolution and the US inspired Cold War. The communist parties in the capitalist world became increasingly social democratised and the social democratic parties became openly liberal. Ideas about revolution were removed from the political agenda, at least in the west.
- 5. From 1968.** A new period was ushered in with 1968 and remains with us today.

Let us examine this period in more detail:

We must not look at 1968 (or for that matter 1848, 1871, 1905 etc) simply from January to December, but as a watershed of previous trends, developments and contradictions, not least economic ones. As we have said, 1968 witnessed the petering out of capitalism's long boom. It saw the beginning of the intermediate stage in capitalism's cycle, the stage between boom and general crisis.

The first sign that the great boom was coming to an end emerged with the 1967 recession. Growth and investment rates fell sharply and, added to this there was a noticeable upward trend in the rates of inflation and unemployment. That this was no passing phase was confirmed over the next 20 years as the capitalist world has been hit by deeper and deeper convulsions, the most pronounced so far being the stock market crash of October '86.

The sages and apologists of capitalism have done everything to obscure the true nature of the crises that seem to be becoming chronic. Arab sheiks, high spending governments, greedy workers and developments in technology have all been blamed. But, as we have shown, the root of the developing crisis of capitalism is to be found in the overproduction of commodities.

This is inevitable in a system which produces for capitalist profit, not human need. All the desperate financial and legislative measures the governments of the capitalist world take to rescue themselves from collapse only stave off the day of reckoning, fuel overproduction and indeed ensure that when the general crisis does come it will be even more devastating and catastrophic.

From a historic standpoint it is transparently clear that there has been a qualitative

change in the world economy. Not surprisingly, few appreciated this at the time. Nevertheless this qualitative economic development has ushered in a revolutionary period (which is associated with but not the same as a revolutionary situation, ie a situation which poses the question of revolution, point blank).

Of course, 1968 was not a year of simultaneous revolution in the west. In fact there were no revolutions here. That said, we should in no way belittle the importance of 1968 for the west.

In France — the most unstable of the major imperialist powers throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s — the state actually wobbled. On May 10-11 1968 — the night of the barricades — thousands of students battled with the CRS



The working class in France were held back by

riot police in Paris and from May 22 there began a three week general strike involving some eight to ten million workers, in what is still the world's largest general strike.

... And, in the US, the black population was propelled into rebellion by poverty and a historic denial of equal rights. As the struggle rose so the turn-the-other-cheek pacifism of Martin Luther King was challenged by the rise of black power.

Militant young blacks flocked into the ranks of the 'revolutionary nationalist' Black Panther Party — which, as was its constitutional right, openly armed. This could not be tolerated by the US ruling class. FBI director J Edgar Hoover called the Panthers the "greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and his men began a bloody campaign to physically wipe them out.

Things reached a peak with the assassination of King on April 5. It provoked an explosion of anger in the black ghettos. There were riots in 110 cities and 'law and order' was only restored through the intervention of 75,000 National Guardsmen.

Yet, while the importance of France's May-June general strike and the riots by blacks in Baltimore, New York, Newark, Chicago, Detroit, Boston etc cannot be denied, they were uncharacteristic. It must be recognised that student unrest was the general feature in the advanced capitalist countries during '68. Indeed, students stood in the front line of the revolutionary struggle.

Almost without exception every country in the heartlands of imperialism experienced student rebellion. They marched, occupied and fought. The universities seethed with anger against professors and vice chancellors, against the war in Vietnam and against the consumer society and its warped values.

Given the social peace and bourgeois conformism of the previous decades, this was undoubtedly positive. Nevertheless the



unprecedented duration and height of the post World War II boom had a marked effect on the politics of '68 and this was undoubtedly negative. The politics of 1968 were, in other words, undeveloped and contradictory.

A not insignificant minority of the sons and daughters of the affluent middle classes were looking for an alternative to the rat race and capitalism. But because of the indeterminate class position of students and the conservatism, passivity and opportunism of 'official' communism, '68 produced politics which were, in spite of their 'New Left' label, pre-Marxist – a throwback to the early nineteenth century and even ancient slave society.

The student revolutionaries of '68 wanted communism, but not the modern proletarian communism of producers, rather the ancient

Tet Offensive.

Vietnam was in the van of the world revolution. Its communist leaders refused to go along with the CPSU and subordinate the revolution to the 'struggle for peace', they knew that real peace could only come through the defeat of imperialism and its satraps. They dared to struggle, they dared to win.

By 1968 the US had 500,000 troops in Vietnam. The US commander in chief, general Westmoreland, was confident that with this vast military machine he would crush the national liberation movement. Tet proved him wrong. The offensive began in February 1968 and by its end the NLF controlled 70 important towns and cities, including Hue, the ancient capital.

The US stopped talking about victory and began to seek ways of avoiding a direct defeat. In March 1968 President Johnson ordered the curtailment of bombing raids over North Vietnam and in May negotiations began which eventually led to US withdrawal in 1973 and the collapse of the Saigon regime two years later.

The Tet Offensive cost the NLF and the regular North Vietnamese army dear. But it marked the decisive turning point in the struggle for national liberation. While US propagandists – along with their friends in the Labour government in Britain – claimed it had been a spectacular failure, it set in motion a chain of events which led the US to its first defeat in the 20th century. The 'American century' was over. And, as shown by the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement and the flotation of the dollar in 1973 and its subsequent precipitous slide, the US began its inexorable decline. Part and parcel of this has been the transformation of the US from the world's biggest creditor nation to its biggest debtor.

The revolutions in the non-imperialist capitalist countries were in the last analysis a product of developments in the world economy. Due to the spread of capitalist relations and the effect of the laws of uneven development, the forces of revolution found more fertile ground in these countries than in the advanced ones. They were weak links of the imperialist chain.

The revolutions in Vietnam and the so-called 'Third World', found a powerful, if distorted, echo in the west. Tet captured the imagination of the whole of progressive humanity, not least the students. Hence, while capitalism and its crises spread from the metropolitan countries to the peripheral ones, the law of combined development meant that the revolution spread from the periphery to the metropolis.

The students acted as the barometer. The subsequent rapid and demoralised decline of student revolutionism should not detract from the historic importance of 1968 itself.

The 'Victory to the Viet Cong' slogans and the 'Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh' chants in Paris, Washington, London, Tokyo, Berlin and Rome were a sign of the times. They announced that the weather vein of history had moved. The period of social peace which had characterised world politics throughout the 1950s and into the 60s was at an end. Hence 1968 shattered the myths of a stabilised Keynesian capitalism. It showed that capitalism was mortal.

Certainly since 1968 we have had a capitalism characterised by stagnation, unemployment and instability rather than as before by boom, full employment and confidence. The class struggle in the advanced capitalist countries has, as a consequence, become sharper. And undoubtedly, although the students were initially in the vanguard, the working class stirred from its post-World War II lethargy and came to the fore. It presents a far more sustained and powerful challenge to the established order than ever the students did or could.

In the 'hot autumn' of 1969 Italy experienced a mighty strike wave which involved between 12 and 15 million workers. The working class also constituted the main social force which brought to an end the fascist regimes in Greece, Spain and Portugal. In Turkey a revolutionary situation spanned the whole of the 1970s and in 1977 and '78 saw the biggest May Day demonstrations in the capitalist world.

Even in conservative Britain we saw between 1968 and 1974 political strikes against attempts to legally shackle the trade unions. And since then the stakes were raised by the Thatcher government not least in its battle with the miners in the Great Strike – the longest mass strike in European history.

Looking at these developments and the revolutions in countries such as Vietnam, Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, Laos, Kampuchea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Nicaragua, the Allende government in Chile, the upsurge in South Africa, the fall of the Shah, and the revolutionary struggle for national liberation in Ireland and Palestine, who can doubt that we are living in a revolutionary period.

Yet, on balance, although we have seen a number of successful revolutions since 1968 and the putting of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries back on the agenda, it is legitimate to paraphrase the celebrated statement of Marx in regard to the revolutions of 1848.

We must say of the events of 1968 that all things considered its greatness lies, not so much in the achievement of any positive gains, as in exposing illusions; illusions in the crisis-free nature of capitalism, illusions in social democracy and illusions in the 'New Left'. In fact 1968 brought to the surface many of the key problems and contradictions of the world revolution, centrally the failure of the world communist movement which organised the majority of advanced workers in its ranks.

This can be best illustrated if we take China, France and Czechoslovakia as our examples. Between them they represent almost every facet of the crisis of 'official' communism, ie the crisis of 'official' communism in a backward socialist country, an advanced capitalist country and a less backward socialist country.

## China

In 1968 many revolutionary groups in the west claimed to be followers of 'Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought'. Indeed in France, Federal Germany, Italy and the United States these groups contained between them the bulk of the young revolutionary activists.

This situation was facilitated in part by the principled positions Mao defended against the CPSU, in part it was the fact that his writings were open to a wide variety of interpretations, they were open to simplification and it must be said distortion.

But while the polemics against the CPSU in the early '60s saw the creation of a number of splits from 'official' communism, most Maoists drew their inspiration from the China of the Cultural Revolution. It stood in exciting contrast to the grey conservatism of Soviet 'official' communism.

For Mao, 'official' communism had failed. It was bound to produce bureaucratic tendencies which looked not to communism but to the mechanisms of capitalism. Seeing China's socialism develop along the lines of the Soviet Union, with a passive population and an alienated, self serving, privileged bureaucracy, Mao Zedong launched what he called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Between 1966 and 1968 China was in turmoil.

The target of Mao's student Red Guards, and the equivalent workers' organisations, was not only the 'four olds': old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits.

On August 5 1966 Mao Zedong issued a call to 'Bombard the Headquarters'. This was directed against the CCP itself and leaders like Deng Xiaoping, who were accused of following 'the capitalist road', ie the road of the CPSU.

The Cultural Revolution was about more than a left/right faction fight in the Chinese Party. In the early part of 1967 revolutionary committees began running the government.

The Cultural Revolution was clearly an attempt by Mao to rekindle the revolutionary spirit in China and create an egalitarian form of socialism. Unfortunately the methods used owed more to petty bourgeois utopianism than scientific socialism.

Under the new regime China's economic policy was put on a different footing. The drive for self sufficiency took the place of both the market and the plan.

This meant small factories were preferred to large ones. Along with this any attempt at sophisticated planning was abandoned, detailed statistics on the economy were not collected. On the other hand, those making a profit through the market were attacked for following the capitalist road. In line with this economic incentives such as bonuses and wage differentials were discouraged and government officials and white collar workers made to do regular stints of manual labour.

Failure was unavoidable. Economic growth

slowed, the revolutionary committees were soon being run by the army and it was only a matter of time before the conservative bureaucracy worked its way back into power.

None of this should lead us to dismiss the Cultural Revolution out of hand or belittle Mao Zedong as some have done.

If he had not ignored Soviet instructions in the 1930s to unite with the bourgeois nationalist Guomindang, China would never have had a revolution. If the line of the CPSU had been followed, China would today be little different from India. That it is not was in no small measure due to the leadership of Mao. He was a great revolutionary.

That Soviet national narrowness provoked anti-Sovietism in Mao, that his attempt to build a more dynamic form of socialism failed, should not be used to damn him into oblivion.

His Cultural Revolution was provoked by a recognition that Soviet style socialism had reached an impasse. On balance he made many correct criticisms of Soviet bureaucratic socialism and the politics of the CPSU, not least that on war and peace. The Cultural Revolution was a brave attempt to introduce a non-bureaucratic form of socialism in what was a very backward country.

Yet in the west the Maoists were poor pupils of their master. While Mao's Cultural Revolution proved a tragic failure, his disciples were not up to the tasks of building serious revolutionary parties. They acted more like anarchists than serious communists. Their slogans were farcical versions of instant revolution. Not surprisingly, following 1968 and the conservative turn in China, Maoist groups either disappeared or rapidly declined and split into pathetic micro sects.

## France

The French Communist Party has no official document on the events of May '68. When we examine its record this does not surprise us. It was in a very powerful position to influence the struggles of May '68. The PCF commanded around 20% of the popular vote and led the largest trade union federation, the CGT. But the PCF was no revolutionary party, it was a party of 'official' communism.

Ironically *The Economist* of May 25 1968 put its finger on the question. It wrote:

**"A revolution requires the coming together of a revolutionary situation and a party or an organisation ready to take power. Since France has been virtually brought to a standstill, the situation might appear revolutionary. But the party that has always claimed the revolutionary role shows no sign of wanting to fill it. The Communists have jumped on the train, but only to pull the brake."**

This is to exaggerate what was at stake in France in May 1968. Nevertheless, what *The Economist* said about May '68 was far more profound than the reformist platitudes the PCF came out with. And no genuine communist can afford to ignore what our enemies say about our movement. To do so is more than complacent, it is to desert reality.

Certainly, as the leading workers' party in the country, the PCF could firstly have ensured that the working class identified itself with the massive explosion of student unrest and, secondly it could – with its social weight – have gained hegemony for the proletariat over the unfolding events and given them a clear revolutionary direction.

It was not a question of launching an immediate insurrection. This is a diversion, incidentally also peddled by the PCF. Obviously that would have been a fiasco. Even ignoring the little matter of arms, the situation was not ripe for the revolutionary seizure of power.

Nonetheless, as the editor in chief of *Le Monde*, Pierre Vianson-Ponte, wrote, **"France may go from a grave national crisis to a revolutionary situation in a climate of violence and confusion."** (May 28 1968) In other words, May '68 posed the question of revolution and could have led to revolution. And surely the task of communists is to actively prepare the working class for revolution, not denounce the most advanced elements and search out some non-existent middle course.

The events of May '68 could have played a vital role in preparing the working class for revolution. At worst it could have led to France's 1905. Of this we have no doubts.

A genuine Communist Party would have linked up the workers' strike committees with the student action committees to create local organs of power (over which the working class



the PCF

proletarian communism of the consumer. This reflected the non-productive class position of students. Their communism was more that of Nazarene Christianity, Thomas Moore and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, than Marx, Engels and Lenin. And where the parasitic ancient proletariat were bought off and corrupted by free bread and circuses, dope, free rock festivals and the commercialisation of rebellion were used instead to achieve the same effect with the youth of '68.

Failure, self destruction and de-politicising demoralisation was always the most likely outcome. Capitalism could never be abolished through the infantile antics of the so-called New Left, let alone the drugs, sexual promiscuity and nihilistic posturing of the 'counter-culture'. These were heady but ultimately disappointing times in the west.

Without the leadership of the working class the revolt of student youth inevitably fizzled out. Student revolutionism was, by its very nature, mercurial and lacking in social weight. Most student revolutionaries were easily reabsorbed into mainstream bourgeois society through career and social democracy. A minority retreated into religion, irrationalism or drop out utopianism; an even smaller minority into the individual terrorism of the Red Brigades, the Weathermen and Action Directe.

## World view

Only if we take a global view does 1968 assume its full stature. 1968 was not only a year of violent demonstration in France, Britain, Japan, the US and Germany. Events here combined, intersected and were inspired by the Cuba of Fidel Castro and 'Che' Guevara, Mao's Red Guards and above all the revolutionary upheavals in the so-called 'Third World', ie the medium developed and backward countries, not least the Vietnam of the



would have exercised hegemony); organised workers' defence corps in defence of factory occupations and the student youth; and gone all out to win support in the army and the police.

What ever happened — even if the army had intervened — constitutional illusions would have been swept away. If the ruling class had retreated it would have given working class confidence a tremendous boost, helped to transform it from a class in itself into a class for itself. This would have resulted in the balance of class forces tilting towards the proletariat. Consequently the ruling class would have been thrown into crisis — this would have created objective conditions which would have been revolutionary. There was everything to fight for, everything to win.

The PCF had no such perspective. It didn't dare fight.

Instead of seeking working class hegemony, the PCF denounced the students and their leaders in the most strident terms, not in order to win working class hegemony but to create a gulf between the revolutionary students and the proletariat. This showed all too clearly that the PCF feared being associated in any way with anything as unconstitutional as revolution. Like all western 'official' communists, it craved bourgeois respectability.

Hence, not surprisingly, the PCF eschewed the bright red banner of proletarian internationalism for the false 'socialism in the colours of France'. The up and coming Georges Marchais joined the reactionary chauvinist chorus against Daniel Cohn-Bendit — who although brought up in France was deported because of his German parentage. In reality Cohn-Bendit's crime was his revolutionary activities. Yet this did not stop Marchais describing him as a "German anarchist". This was no simple statement of fact but an act of filthy chauvinistic sectarianism from which the French bourgeoisie could only gain strength.

And, like Neil Kinnock's claim that the miners' violence during the Great Strike helped Thatcher, Waldeck Rochet, then leader of the PCF, condemned student "demonstrations, accompanied by barricades and outbreaks of fire" because it "played into the hands of the Gaullist regime". It was, of course, the PCF which played into the hands of reaction.

As the struggle of the students gained momentum with the violent street battles with the CRS on the night of May 10-11, the PCF attempted to reassert its authority by getting the CGT to call a one day general strike on May 13 and making revolutionary noises. It wheeled out Roger Garaudy, of all people (later expelled from the PCF for liberalism — he then became a Christian and is now a Muslim).

Garaudy claimed that the PCF "joyfully welcomed the human ferment" but cynically added that the student movement had to be vigilant against "deception and adventurers". This and a token general strike hardly added up to revolutionary leadership. In fact the PCF trailed far behind the masses.

The unrest spread from the student milieu to the working class. It spontaneously grew into an unprecedented wave of strikes and factory occupations. The PCF did its utmost to rein in the movement and, failing this, it sought to keep it within safe economic channels.

A real Communist Party would not have ignored the economic demands of the working class, far from it, but would have done everything to politicise the struggle and achieve proletarian hegemony (and discipline) over the students. The PCF did not do this.

It showed its true reformist essence by closing its eyes to the storm that raged around it. All it wanted to achieve was reform.

Strategically the PCF staked everything on a *British Road to Socialism* style fawning before bourgeois legality and securing progress through parliamentary elections. In this it was supported by the CPSU and in Britain, naturally, by the *Morning Star*, which dismissed the leaders of the revolutionary French students merely as "a handful of anarchists".

The May events were, for the PCF, an unforeseen and unwelcome diversion from the pipe dream aim of a parliamentary majority which would legislate in socialism. Like opportunists the world over, ironically its reformism, its supposed 'realism', ie its cowardice, had the effect of strengthening the hand of reaction. As a consequence all the golden reformist dreams of opportunism were in danger of being fouled up.

De Gaulle understood full well that the

students alone presented no sustainable challenge to the existing order. But combined with a massive general strike it was a different matter. Even though it did not come, he feared revolution. During his secret visit to Baden-Baden, he and General Massau — commander of the French army — drew up plans for crushing Paris. His broadcast to the nation on May 30 contained a veiled threat of civil war.

Having vociferously denounced the students, the PCF promised it would in no way consider launching "an insurrectionary strike" for fear of "the setting up of a military dictatorship". Thus De Gaulle was allowed to regain the initiative.

He called an election and eight hundred thousand marched down the Champs Elyseé in support of him and the Fifth Republic. The PCF announced it would abide by the decision of the electorate and in doing so fatally demobilised the working class, reducing its power to that of mere atomised individuals putting a cross on a ballot paper. The strike wave nose dived and the window of revolutionary opportunity closed.

If the PCF had acted as a real communist leadership things would have been very different. Many of General Massau's troops could have been neutralised, some won to the side of revolution. The hand of reaction could have been stayed. The student revolutionaries could never have done this, it required proletarian leadership.

Instead the PCF demobilised the working class, isolated it from the students and fostered parliamentary illusions. The PCF paid dearly for this.

De Gaulle gained a sweeping electoral victory, and as a direct result of its failure to fight in a revolutionary way in May '68 the PCF has suffered a precipitous decline ever since. In the recent presidential elections its candidate was pushed into a poor fifth place behind the neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen. Such are the fruits of opportunism.

## Czechoslovakia

The Soviet led intervention in August '68 brought to a halt Czechoslovakia's version of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The Dubcek wing of the Czech labour bureaucracy was interested in building links with the west and reintroducing the mechanisms of the capitalist market. To win support for 'market socialism' it used the sop of 'democratisation' and the poison of nationalism.

Of course, the Dubcek wing of the bureaucracy was incapable of introducing genuine democracy. To do so would have meant that the bureaucracy would lose its privileges and be transformed from master of the working class to servant. This the bureaucracy could not do. It would mean abolishing itself. Only the working class is capable of such an act of 'historical suicide' — in abolishing itself it after all frees itself.

By its very nature the Soviet led intervention was contradictory. It stopped in its tracks the liberalistic reforms of Dubcek and Ota Sic. Nonetheless its 'defence of socialism' was totally bureaucratic. It was not an act of proletarian internationalism but smacked of big power chauvinism.

Dubcek was arrested and taken to Moscow in chains. This was hardly the way the leaders of one socialist state should treat another. Brezhnev clearly considered the Czechoslovak leadership unruly factotums.

With the Soviet army in virtual occupation over the next year the conservative elements were put back in control and the democratic sops given by Dubcek were taken away. Understandably this provoked a surge of mass discontent. Students and workers struck and illegal demonstrations continued into the spring of 1969.

The Soviet backed section of the bureaucracy could never win the support of the masses. Dubcek's 'market socialism' reforms had been ended by tanks, not politics and polemics. Active resistance gave way to a sullen resentment and the sluggish economy continued its relative decline.

The Soviet led intervention was an admission of the failure of bureaucratic socialism in both its liberal and conservative forms. It left the Soviet Union sullied in the eyes of revolutionary students and workers in the west. After 1968 the form of socialism we see in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe rapidly lost any attraction for workers in the west.

This gave added impetus to the decline of 'official' communism, and defence of Dubcek

gave what became Eurocommunism its cause.

## Lessons of '68

The importance of 1968 is three-fold. One, it ushered in a new, revolutionary, period. Two, it pointed to the failure of 'official' communism. Three — and most importantly for the work of revolutionaries — it created material conditions which necessitate the working class building genuine communist parties.

Since 1968 the mole of revolution has been burrowing away underneath the surface of the capitalist order but has still to decisively undermine it. Revolutions have broken out but they have been either defeated or forced to stop half way. But no matter how often the forces of reaction throws it back, retreat is becoming impossible, the conditions of impending general crisis cry out for a qualitative leap: "*Hic Rhodus, hic salta*."

Maoism among the Chinese, the US anti-war movement, black power, the utopian leftism of the students — these were not accidental outbreaks that could just as well not have appeared; they vocalised between them a rebellion against the old world of the 1950s and 60s. While they were not the answer, these movements pointed to the coming general crisis of world capitalism as well as to the deep problems which have corrupted 'official' communism.

We must mercilessly criticise the struggles of '68, not because they lacked heroism, not because bourgeois society has reabsorbed so many of its leaders, not because of its youthful immaturity. Our criticisms must be made in order to create a movement which supplies the answers — organisational, political and ideological — which can do what 1968 failed to do: bring capitalism to its knees and then, without hesitation or compunction, finish it off.

What is required is the building of genuine communist parties. Communist parties which are capable of surviving all that capitalism and its state can throw against us: bribery, infiltration, persecution. Communist parties which can and will singlemindedly pursue the aim of revolution, parties which will have no truck with those who can only see progress in terms of doing deals with capitalism and its agents, parties in the tradition of Lenin.

Unfortunately it must be said that the world communist movement, as it stands today, is incapable of carrying out this role. It has been hijacked by the forces of opportunism.

This has been done under the leadership of the CPSU. It bears prime responsibility for the parlous state of the world communist movement today. Since Lenin the leaders of the CPSU have pursued policies which first sought a live-and-let-live relationship with imperialism (it was said, in order to 'bury' it) and now seek to appease it (or it will bury the Soviet bloc).

To facilitate their courtship of imperialism leaders of the CPSU from Stalin to Gorbachev have done everything they can to encourage communist parties to ingratiate themselves with their 'own' national bourgeoisies. The results of this have done immeasurable harm to the progress of the world revolution.

Certainly as a result of CPSU encouraged revisionism the world communist movement today is not a movement of revolutionary parties. Many communist parties in it have no relationship with communism except for their names. Others are hopelessly centrist and hardly any are capable of fighting in a revolutionary way, let alone in a communist way.

Consequently, when put to the test in '68, the communist parties in the west abysmally failed to provide anything in the way of revolutionary leadership. Since then they have sought to wipe out the collective memory of their failure by trying to wipe out the collective memory of '68 itself, not least the revolutionary enthusiasm, the revolutionary slogans, the revolutionary forms of organisation and methods of struggle which 1968 produced in such profusion and variety.

Since 1968 the world communist movement has hardly stood still. Far from it. We have seen the world communist movement continue its backward march ... right, right, right ... right, right, right ... What the Eurocommunists were saying in 1968, the 'officials', the centrists, are saying now.

In Britain we have seen the disintegration of the 'official' communist movement. Numerical collapse has been joined by organisational splintering. Given the domination of opportunism, this was bound to happen.

But against the tide of rightism and the slide

into chaos *The Leninist* has emerged. It is dedicated to reforging the CPGB founded in 1920, recapturing the name of our Party which has been brought into such disrepute by the opportunists.

The struggle we have begun in the communist movement in Britain will undoubtedly be repeated in one country after another. We are sure it will embrace the whole world communist movement. Already in Turkey the Leninist struggle has reached the point where the genuine communist forces are now rightly in the leadership of their party, the Communist Party of Turkey.

However long it takes, we are confident that our struggle will also reach this point. More, we are confident that the world organisational unity of communists, liquidated in 1943, will be rebuilt, but on a higher level.

Our confidence is not merely the result of the optimism which all revolutionaries must have in abundance. No, our confidence flows from the fact that the class struggle of the working class itself demands more than rebellion, it necessitates the highest level of revolutionary organisation: another name for which is a Communist Party. The creation of a genuine Communist Party in Britain and the unity of this party with all other genuine communist parties into a world party of proletarian revolution flows from capitalism's crisis. It is an objective requirement of the class struggle.

This is the main lesson of '68. A lesson we alone in the communist movement in Britain are capable of taking to heart and putting into practice.

It is because we have supreme confidence in the working class and the inevitability of its victory that we have always approached our organisational tasks from the starting point of what is necessary, not what seems to be possible.

Thus, when *The Leninist* was first launched, in pure organisational and financial terms it was a non-starter. It was our correct politics that made it possible, that enabled us to win the financial commitment from our supporters which made it see the light of day. The same applied when we went from quarterly to monthly publication, and then monthly to fortnightly publication.

Compare our approach to that of the opportunists. They always start with what they think possible and, given their politics, they have very little possibilities. Take the CPB. It has a *part time* general secretary, only two editions of its 'theoretical journal' will be produced this year because of lack of money and it is said that its editor only agreed to work for the CPB if his terms and conditions included a pension plan!

Our comrades can only look upon such an organisation with contempt. The CPB lacks any trace of communist morality. No revolutionary negotiates with their party a pension plan, and what sort of revolutionary party employs a professional revolutionary who lays down such conditions? No revolutionary treats their party as an employer. A real revolutionary asks what they can do for their party, not what their party can do for them. For the genuine communist, life itself is the struggle for revolution.

We have inculcated this attitude among our comrades. Of course, it has been no easy matter and we have a long way still to go. We have lost many who could only talk about revolution. The level of commitment we require — not least the financial level of commitment — has acted as a purge of all that is soft, all that is rotten. This is an excellent thing. We are building an organisation that has the aim of smashing the bourgeois state machine. Our aims are serious, so our comrades must be. What we have achieved — for all its limitations — speaks for itself.

As all our comrades know full well, the financial commitment that has enabled our organisation to make such startling progress since November 1981 — when the first edition of *The Leninist* was published — has, over the last four years, been institutionalised in our annual Summer Offensive. Starting off modestly it is now a veritable locomotive. This year our still small core of supporters and sympathisers will between them raise well over £10,000 in two months.

Comrades, we know that our future Offensives will dwarf this figure — this is what the revolutionary period ushered in by 1968 necessitates — this is what our organisation and its supporters will deliver.

Long live *The Leninist*!  
Victory to our Fifth Summer Offensive!



# Double dealers

Workers in Turkey view the two UCPT leaders with a jaundiced eye. The question that has been raised in all circles of Turkish society is, was there a deal behind their return to Turkey last November? It is a question that must be answered not only by communists in Turkey, but communists everywhere

**T**HE TRIAL of the two leaders of the 'official' United Communist Party of Turkey (formerly the 'official' Communist Party and Workers Party of Turkey), Haydar Kutlu and Dr Nihat Sargin, has become a *cause celebre* in the world communist movement.

In Britain we have seen the launch of the 'Free Kutlu and Sargin' committee, mainly staffed by CPGB members and UCPT supporters here. On the May Day demo, London District CPGB even tried to play off a little easy support from the Turkish community by taking the slogan 'Free Kutlu and Sargin' onto their banner. CPGB general secretary, Gordon McLennan, was in Ankara for the beginning of the trial.

The accused have been charged with (among other things) "slandering the state abroad" and "making propaganda for communism", all of which are illegal under the notorious articles 141 and 142 of the Mussolini-inspired penal code. The two UCPT leaders face death or prison sentences which add up to 800 years.

It may seem strange, then, that this should, by and large, only provoke scepticism among the working class of Turkey. This is in spite of the fact that the working class is gaining new strength and confidence, and the solidarity movement with the country's 15-20,000 political prisoners has reached new heights with angry demonstrations organised by the relatives' action committees. Also inside the prisons things are escalating. There has been a rash of hunger strikes and on March 24 there was a break-out of 29 political prisoners of the revolutionary left, 11 of whom were under sentence of death.

Against this backdrop, Kutlu and Sargin have provoked little sympathy. In point of fact their case has become known as 'the return of the pink panthers'. All sections of the revolutionary left in Turkey mistrust the motives behind their return. Not even the UCPT has raised the slogan to free Kutlu and Sargin as a focus of work in Turkey. Rather, it has had a diplomatic function abroad.

Why is this so? Why, while the trials of activists of the Turkish revolutionary left and Kurdish freedom fighters generate growing and ever more visible support from the working class in Turkey, has the trial of Kutlu and Sargin been greeted with scepticism by all sections of society in Turkey, not least of all Turkish workers? At a time when the combativeness of workers there is growing, it is hardly to do with any lack of ability to fight, or will to defend their own.

Workers in Turkey view the two

UCPT leaders with a jaundiced eye. The question that has been raised in all circles of society in Turkey is, what motives lay behind their *open* return in November of last year? Arrest was surely certain, the organisation of 'class parties' is illegal in Turkey.

As soon as Sargin and Kutlu made their VIP landing in Ankara (from Brussels and West Berlin respectively), virtually the entire press in Turkey agreed that the return was the result of a deal between the UCPT and the Ozal regime, which wants a safe 'Turkish style' Eurocommunist party in order to enhance Turkey's 'democratic' credentials in front of the European Community. "A trick is being played", was the way the entire spectrum of the revolutionary left – from the Kurdish PKK to the pro-Chinese CPT (Marxist-Leninist) – summed up the return. No serious communist can afford to dismiss such accusations. To do so is an act of political cowardice and dishonesty.

Nonetheless certain leading elements in the CPGB, the CPB, through to an assortment of Trotskyists, have pointed the finger at us for our 'churlish' lack of enthusiasm in taking up the cry to free Kutlu and Sargin.

It is true that we do not *plead* to the Turkish state to free Sargin and Kutlu. We do not *ask* the bourgeois state to free anyone. We look to the mobilisation of the working class to smash the bosses' jails. This is the proletarian way to free the political prisoners held by our class enemy, including Sargin and Kutlu.

However, what makes Kutlu and Sargin different is not that they are political prisoners, not that they are communists, or leading ones at that. No, what makes the 'pink panthers' different is the reason *why* they are in the position that they are and exactly *what* they have tried to pull off.

It would be incorrect to close one's eyes to the motives of Sargin and Kutlu. To refuse to confront the opportunism which saw them *hand themselves over to the enemy* would be an insult to the mass of Turkey's political prisoners, who have maintained their revolutionary honour. It would also be to ignore the fact that by allowing themselves to be arrested and interrogated, over 130 people – including many UCPT provincial committee members – were arrested either because the two revealed their names under torture or in order to discredit Sargin and Kutlu as leaders.

Kutlu and Sargin are not Turkish versions of Thälmann or Dimitrov. These communists did not *hand themselves over* to the bourgeois state; they were captured, and Thälmann paid the supreme price.

He did not voluntarily walk into Hitler's hands. Yet, what else are we to surmise from the behaviour of Kutlu and Sargin? Are we to assume that they are complete political naïves to *hand themselves over* in this way. Anyone with any familiarity with the Turkish state's attitude to communists, from the time when the entire CPT Central Committee was drowned in the Black Sea in 1920, will be aware that it is none-too-indulgent.

One does not have to read too closely between the lines of statements of the leaders of the UCPT and the Turkish state to smell a rat. Indeed, it is a veritable stench. General Kenan Evren, the bloody architect of the September 12 1980 fascist coup, is quoted as saying, with regard to the two UCPT leaders: "If they arrive at a stage like what we call Eurocommunism, of not taking directives from abroad, then perhaps these parties could be established in Turkey." (Gunaydin, November 18 1987)

The opportunists took note. On the fusion of the WPT and CPT, the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and proletarian internationalism, among others, have been dropped. The programme of the UCPT is now little different in essence to that of the Italian and British parties.

Haydar Kutlu was quick to assure the Turkish bourgeoisie that they were not returning to their country to make any trouble, let alone revolution: "Our aim in returning to Turkey is not to create tension. We are not coming for a show of strength, either." Kutlu was quite open that he was offering the Turkish ruling class an easier ride than they would get without him and his party: If they were not legalised "I think, stability in Turkey, which is so much talked about, will not be secured."

This is well in line with the international line taken by the Gorbachev leadership of the CPSU, who are trying to portray themselves as just as 'safe' to international imperialism as the UCPT leaders are to Turkish capital.

The reason such deals are on the cards at the present time is well understood by the real communists of Turkey, the Communist Party of Turkey and their paper, *Workers Voice*: "Today in Turkey, the class struggle is rapidly rising. A mighty revolutionary wave is approaching, far greater and more advanced than that of the 1970s." (Turkey Today, winter '87-8)

Turkey, a medium developed capitalist country, is in a state of almost permanent crisis. Again it is being confronted with the alternatives of fascism or revolution.

However, says the CPT, this time, to the horror of the bourgeoisie, one half of the equation is not yet ready. "The working class and

revolutionary forces are maturing. The fascist counterrevolutionary force is missing. The traditional forms taken by fascism in Turkey are not yet ready ... To overcome this unpleasant situation the bourgeoisie needs time - it needs a breathing space."

The Turkish ruling class over the last three years has tried to construct obstacles to stop or divert – at least for a time – the advance to the left of the working class. However, even before they were completed they have collapsed ... "The bourgeoisie has finally arrived at the last barricade – a legal, phoney 'Communist' Party."

This is what was behind the return of Sargin and Kutlu. A deal was hatched either formally or implicitly. It is possible that it has now fallen through. After all, the UCPT leaders are now on trial for their lives. Perhaps the UCPT leaders put their wares on the market a little too crudely.

Instead of creating enthusiasm for the prospect of an open communist party in Turkey, the transparent dealing of Kutlu and Sargin created scepticism. It looks as if the UCPT is going to fail on exactly the same ground as the Social Democrat and Socialist parties have.

In this case, of course, the 'officials' are of no value to the Turkish ruling class. They have no base of any significance to bargain with. From the point of view of the Turkish bourgeoisie, they may as well carpet them. To show they aren't 'messing' they can squeeze the two leaders for as much information on the movement as possible and, by throwing them in jail for the duration, hopefully elevate their standing with the working class as a byproduct, allowing them to be released at any convenient juncture.

Opportunism in Turkey has fatal results, as proven by the September 1980 counterrevolution. It must not occur again. As Lenin said, the opportunists are greater servants of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself.

So, while we say the bourgeoisie in Turkey must release Kutlu and Sargin, along with *all* the political prisoners in Turkey – many of whom are under sentence of death – we should call these two and their party what they are – traitors to the working class and revolution.

Turkey, like every country, needs a communist party which will smash capitalism, not accommodate to it. We are confident that this role is filled by the Communist Party of Turkey, which makes no appeals to be legalised, no representations to the bourgeoisie of how 'safe' and 'loyal' it is. As we Leninists say, revolutions aren't for sale, whether they be in Afghanistan, Angola or Turkey.

Alan Merrik

## ALL OUT AGAINST EVRIN

General Evrin, head of the Turkish state, is paying an official visit to Britain in July. We urge all our readers to support the following protests:

• Rally against Evrin, organised by the Union of Turkish Progressives and others, Shoreditch Town Hall, 7.00pm June 25. For more information contact – Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey: 84, Balls Pond Road, London N1 4AJ. Tel: (01)254 0387.

• Demonstration against Evrin. From Reformers Tree to Downing Street, 2.00pm July 2. Contact – Committee to Stop General Evrin's Visit to the UK, c/o Liberty Hall, 489, Kingsland Road, London E8.



The central committee of the New Communist Party is totally dishonest when it comes to defending gays and lesbians against the bigots charter, Clause 28. In a devious report of its deliberations in New Worker of May 20, they claim to oppose it ... but not enough to campaign against it. Why? Because they are opposed to "attempts to project homosexuality as 'an equally valid lifestyle' to heterosexuality" – which is exactly what the Clause is designed to outlaw! The NCP ought to have the honesty to 'come out' and admit that it has more in common with Thatcher than a love for Gorbachev – they both hate 'queers'.

While on the subject of honesty, word reaches us that Nick Wright – the Straight Leftist goon pictured in the pages of this paper duffing up Kevin Nolan, a gay activist – is claiming that the picture has been 'doctored' and even that it originally appeared in National Front News. Of course, we did not 'doctor' it. As to where it first appeared, we don't read National Front News ... not because we don't read racist filth on principle or anything like that, just that the NF is of little importance at the moment. What Wright gets from NF News might be worth investigating. Is it their line on dealing with homosexuals? We don't know. But what we do know is that Wright should tell us what he was doing hitting Kevin Nolan – who incidentally thought he was being hit by a member of 'Parents Against Perverts'. Wright refuses and we have been told that he is talking about taking the matter to the bourgeois courts! This would be an act of class treachery ... if Wright thinks he has been misrepresented he knows our address.

Grown communists were seen to break down and weep openly in the streets, with the announcement earlier this month that the Proletarian sectlet had split. Dissident ex-Proles handed out leaflets outside the Morning Star AGM proclaiming this fact, on the basis that their erstwhile guru, Keith Nilsen was a "repellent character" and suffered from a slight case of "egomania". There's nothing like a sound political basis for a schism is there? Oh well, we suppose this will delay the long awaited number three of their journal even more.



## OPPORTUNISM

CPBers used to claim they would organise the majority of communists in Britain. By its congress it only claimed 1,591 members

# CPB — fewer but not better

**L**EADERS of the Communist Party of Britain ought to be reminded of Lenin's axioms: *telling the truth is a sign of strength*. For not only has the CPB stood by a political programme — the *British Road to Socialism* — that many of its leaders voted against when it was introduced in November 1977; they also try and fool their rank and file about the size of the CPB.

Tom Durkin, for example, claimed that it would unite "the majority of communists in Britain", a 'fact' that countered the argument that the formation of the CPB had nothing to do with 're-establishing' the CPGB but was quite simply a *split*. This con-job was an important lever used by the likes of Photis Lysandrou to winkle members out of the CPGB.

'Re-establishment' was always a fraud, possible to pull off while the split was still in the preparatory stage. But now the organisation is out 'in the big wide world'. It is now possible, using sources such as the May edition of the *Straight Leftist's Communist*, as well as our own, to comprehensively puncture the lie that the CPB organises in its ranks "the majority of communists in Britain".

Already at the time of its congress, held over the weekend of April 23/24 1988, the CPB had shrunk its membership claims to only 1,591. However, as we pointed out at the time, even this was an exaggeration. Basically, it was arrived at by dishonest means, ie juggling the books. There were 150 delegates each purporting to represent 10 members, *ipso facto*

there were 1,500 members of the CPB.

In reality, however, many delegates did not represent 10 members. Hackney CCG, for example, sent eight delegates, implying eighty members. In fact, the paper strength of this branch is around 40. Similarly, we hear reports of one CPB leader claiming to have taken 48 members out of a branch which only had a membership of 34 in the first place!

At a 'guesstimate' we reckon the CPB has something less than 1,300 members (most of whom are not active) organised in roughly 60 branches. Hardly the "majority of communists in Britain".

Below is a brief survey of the patterns of support for the new 'party' in the districts of the CPGB.

- East Midlands. At the April meeting of the District Committee, nine members announced they were joining the CPB. In contrast to some other districts, which have turned a blind eye to the split, an appeal (undated) was issued to those who have "differences and reservations" to remain loyal to the CPGB. Nonetheless most of the Chesterfield branch has left, and a big chunk of Leicester membership. However, the CPB has taken little of what industrial base the CPGB has left: very few have split in Nottingham and the new organisation has taken none of the area's miners. CPB membership is 50 — mostly older comrades. In 1987, CPGB membership was around 375.

- Scotland. This is the CPGB's strongest area, with 2,500 mem-

bers in 1987. In spite of this the CPB can only muster about 160 members. About half of them are concentrated in Glasgow and the rest scattered in groups of 5 to 10, apart from Edinburgh, which has about 20.

- London. A supposed CPB 'stronghold', with around 300 members (last year's figure for the CPGB was 1,700). CPBers are concentrated mainly in branches dissolved by the CPGB executive following the 1984 aborted district congress: 80 in Haringey, 40 each in Hackney and Brent, 30 in Westminster and small groups in Camden/Islington, Southwark and Lambeth.

- North West. Proportionate to the CPGB probably the CPB's strongest district, but even here things are very uneven. Merseyside boasts 105 CPBers, or one quarter of the area's total CPGB membership. But only about 20 of these are 'active' and most have not resigned from CPGB and seem to have no intention of doing so. Greater Manchester CPB claims 300 — mainly in Salford and North Manchester: this is only slightly less than the CPGB strength. The CPB has nothing in Lancashire or Cheshire. CPGB membership in 1987 was 1,700.

- Yorkshire. Roughly about 30 CPBers in West Yorkshire (Leeds, Halifax, Bradford) and 20 in South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster). The West Yorkshire CPBers are characteristically elderly, while the South Yorkshire organisation is based largely on one branch, Shadlows (a branch which was inactive before and after

the decision to split). It has taken no miners. CPGB membership in 1987 was just over 700.

- Midlands. Five branches established with around 50 people. CPGB membership near 700.

- Wales. The CPB has five branches, with no more than 60 members. The CPGB had 600 members in 1987.

- Eastern. The CPGB in 1987 was 500 strong; the CPB will probably not pull much above 20.

- South East Midlands. Only two branches even attempted in this area. Watford, where the majority of the branch leadership (but not the majority of the branch) split, and one other 'branch' covering the rest of the district (Luton, Wel-lingborough, Northampton, Cambridge etc). The CPB is unlikely to pick up more than a few dozen people, in comparison to the CPGB's 330 last year.

- West Middlesex. Kevin Halpin's branch — Acton rails — left *en masse* to give the CPB its only true workplace branch. Ealing also saw a majority go to the CPB; but Berkshire, Slough and Reading are really not affected. Altogether the CPB will take about 50 out of a 1987 300 total for the CPGB. Here, at least, the CPB will have a viable organisation — but not the whole district as it had hoped for.

- West of England. Possibly one small branch in Bristol with under 10 people involved. In 1987, the CPGB was 300 strong.

- Northern. Two CPB branches. Out of a 250 total for the CPGB in 1987, 30 have gone with the CPB who include the majority of the Carlisle branch, and small groups

from Newcastle and Northumberland. Everywhere else, the CPB has taken ones and twos.

- Kent. The Kent miners' branch has gone with the CPB (but it was only five strong and included retired miners). However, the CPB is unlikely to make much of a dent on the 200 or so members of the district. There is only one 'active' group which is some 10 strong around Richard Maybin which meets monthly.

- Hants and Dorset. Last year, CPGB membership was 170 and the CPB has made very little dent into this total.

- Surrey. The CPB has no branches in this home ground of NCPism.

- Sussex. Exaggerated CPB claims for 20 supporters out of a 1987 membership of 120. This support comes mainly from Brighton and Crawley.

- Youth Section. Fifty young CPBers met in Manchester in mid-March and two editions of its *Young Communist* have been produced (see reviews page).

Clearly, the CPB does not organise the 'majority' of communists in Britain. And what it lacks in numbers it also lacks in commitment. It has a *part time* general secretary and a *part time* approach to work.

For example, only £4,000 was raised for its launch — the target was £25,000 — or, using the CPB's figures, £2.50 per member. If this is true the CPB will hardly shake the bourgeois order. It will be lucky to be still around when we make the revolution.

Ian Mahoney

# PPPS — Star wars fiasco

**B**EFORE the Communist Party of Britain was launched we said that it would disintegrate. It has not happened yet. But a mere two months after it was formed the signs are already there. We named the CPB "Chater's Titanic". Just how accurate we were can now be seen. The CPB has completely isolated itself from its former allies whom it was banking on recruiting. Yes, there is yet another split in 'official' communism and this can only hasten the disintegration of the CPB. Now it stands isolated and friendless. This can only but have a knock-on effect in its ranks.

As we have reported, the CPB did not take with it the majority of communists in Britain, indeed it did not take the majority of those opposed to Eurocommunism within the CPGB, not even the majority of the *Morning Star's* Management Committee.

The CPB has tried to put itself over as the 're-established CPGB' but, as this month's AGM of the People's Press Printing Society (the co-operative which owns the *Morning Star*) proved, facts are facts. The CPB is *opposed* by a swathe of its former comrades. It is a narrow sect.

Being presented with two opposing slates might not have come as a surprise to those who have attended PPPS AGM's over recent

years. But what came as a profound shock was that the two slates were not this time that of the proto-CPB and that of the CPGB, but those of the CPB and the paper's *Management Committee*.

The CPB did not come out in the open as the CPB. Its leaders chose to use the Tower Hamlets *Morning Star* Group as a front. The Management Committee, as usual, had its own recommended list.

CPB leaders such as Mike Hicks and Tom Durkin claimed they opposed no one. It was just that they preferred those put forward by Tower Hamlets.

Barbara Switzer, of the Labour Party and MSF (1,042 votes) and George Wake, a dissident CPGB member (998 votes) were returned with the support of both the Management Committee and the CPB. But three others, Stan Dalby (701 votes), David Guy (724 votes) and Bob Jones (699), were put forward using the CPB code of 'those who sell it should run it'. The other Management Committee candidates Tom Sibley (a sitting member), Ray Alderson (a leading CPGB member) and Peter Hagger (a TGWU representative on the TUC general council) were defeated by a margin of 2 to 1.

Now although the CPB gained a victory, it has lost the struggle to become the Communist Party in Britain. As shown by the nearly

400 votes cast for Management Committee candidates and motions there is a deep gulf dividing the pro-CPB *Morning Star* group and the anti-CPB *Morning Star* group.

At the PPPS AGM the division between the two factions was clear, deep and full of bitter anger. Even though partisans couched their contributions in code, the temperature often reached boiling point: in Glasgow the meeting nearly came to blows.

Veteran Jack Gaster, speaking on the side of the Management Committee, made clear his opposition to the CPB, which he branded "an outside body". This, of course, is precisely the code word Tony Chater himself used to describe the CPGB when he staged his bureaucratic rebellion back in 1983.

Gaster also accused the CPB of "sowing new divisions" which he claimed greatly "distressed" him. This did not stop him putting the boot in against Chater. He claimed that the "editor is not responsible to the management committee of the PPPS ... I find this most disturbing," he added.

The pro-CPB *Morning Star* faction failed in political terms to effectively counter the rhetoric of the anti-CPB *Morning Star* faction. Having staged a rebellion against CPGB control of the paper by call-

ing it an 'outside body' and elevating the democracy of the 'broad movement' above that of the CPGB, they have now been painted with the same anti-party brush and do not know how to effectively counter the charge.

Mary Rosser attacked the Management Committee majority for backing Motion 4 (defeated by 436 votes to 532) which stated that the *Morning Star* should only be "accountable to shareholders but independent of particular parties and groups while promoting the interests of the broad labour, trade union and democratic movements."

This was transparently directed against the CPB. Yet Rosser insisted it was a "CPGB list on behalf of their *Straight Left* faction." Rosser was clearly clutching at straws. The CPGB Executive Committee has officially given up all hope of regaining control of the paper and did nothing whatsoever to mobilise its members to the AGM, let alone mobilise its members to support the Management Committee majority, which consists of dissident CPGB members, anti-CPB ex-CPGB members and their left Labour allies.

The mover of Motion 4, Terry Marsland, is hardly a *Straight Leftist*. And the *Straight Leftists* themselves are not exactly thick on the ground nowadays nor are they

growing. It is true that this tiny faction backed the Management Committee. But this hardly mattered in terms of politics or votes.

Indeed, given its bone headed leadership, its support for the Management Committee might have actually won the CPB support. Andrew Murray denounced the CPB leadership for its "ultra left demagoguery". This says nothing about the CPB's 'ultra leftism' but a lot about the *Straight Leftists* own brand of demagoguery.

When it came to Tony Chater's turn to speak, he too sought to rubbish the non-present CPGB. "The only threat to the *Morning Star's* autonomy," he droned, "came from the CPGB." This is simply untrue and so, it seems, was his claim that the Management Committee had not asked for its recommended list to be published in the *Morning Star* ... for Ken Gill, the chairman of the Management Committee, interrupted to insist that this was "not true".

As the 'broad labour movement' paper of the CPB, the *Morning Star* has not got a bright future. And the fact that it finds itself opposed by so many former friends can only but add to the sense of isolation felt by so many CPB members. It can only be a matter of time before the CPB produces its first split.

David Sherriff





## Seeds of Division

CPB Youth Section *Young Communist* No 2 Printed and published by CPB Youth Section, London 1988, pp18, £0.50p

OPPORTUNIST organisations like the newly formed Communist Party of Britain invariably have problems with their youth. Witness, for example, the rebellion by the youth against the social democratic traitors after World War I, something Lenin did everything to encourage.

The Labour Party has been veritably plagued by various groups of leftists gaining control of its youth organisation. Today it is *Militant*, in the 1930s it was those who were won to the communism of the Third International.

Therefore, if those in the Youth Section of the CPB have any revolutionary guts they will fall out with the opportunists who dominate the CPB. One can see the beginnings of fissions. True, this is only to be found in nuances and differences of emphasis in the CPB Youth Committee's *Young Communist*, but it is there.

First, on the more negative aspects of the *Young Communist*. Clearly, it is the publication of an organisation that is politically confused.

What is *Young Communist* designed to do, exactly? Is it intended to rally all those still around after the collapse of the CPGB's Young Communist League in 1986? It is certainly necessary to trace back the opportunist cancer that killed the YCL to its roots – if this is not done history will farcically repeat itself in the CPB's Youth Section. *Young Communist* should aim for theoretical clarity. This can only be done if it opens up its pages and allows all schools of thought in the communist movement to contend. Genuine communists are confident that truth will win.

Or is it intended to recruit young workers to the Youth Section and thus build a new YCL? If this is the idea, the official optimism that constitutes most of the articles is hardly likely to inspire many young proletarians to join them. Where's the revolutionary passion, the youthful questioning, the fight for decisive action?

On the fight against the Clause, *Young Communist* reads little different from the Euros' old YCL paper *Challenge*. Kim McLean advises readers to "help build the broadest possible campaign against the Clause". In other words a 'brickies to bishops' campaign aimed at parliament.

This is hardly communist leadership, after all this is what the average activist involved in the fight against the Clause has been doing anyway. (By the way, comrade McLean, we presume that as you write "Young Communists not only oppose the Clause but also any other form of discrimination against lesbians and gay men", you would condemn the criminalisation of homosexuality in the USSR

after 1934? We would be interested in your answer).

Similarly, Sara O'Rourke concludes her article on how badly the health service has been treated by the Tories (nothing about the last Labour government) by issuing the sterling call "March 5 and the TUC demonstration in London were an excellent show of strength, but the movement must keep it up. It is a battle we can win!"

If the CPB Youth Section are really serious about building a "well organised, determined and growing organisation of Young Communists", it will hardly be done by filling their publications with pedestrian rehashes of TUC figures on the health industry dispute, with a "keep it up, everybody – you're all doing splendidly" reassurance tacked on the end.

Militant health workers do not suffer from the illusions in the TUC which befuddled the CPB's Youth Section. Rightly, they have contempt for the TUC. Its March 5 rally – so much admired by Sara O'Rourke – was a media stunt. No health workers were allowed to speak. The rally ended in disarray and an assertion of rank and file militancy. Nurses and other health workers stormed the platform and Willis scurried off chased by a former News International print worker shouting 'scab' after him.

On the positive side, *Young Communist* appears willing, in marked contrast to the literature of its 'adult' organisation, to cross polemical swords with forces to the left of it. Thus, an otherwise rather flat article on South Africa by Andy Chaffer and CPB Youth Section secretary Kenny Coyle, is enlivened by the authors' decision to do battle with the Trotskyites' hopelessly confused view of the character the coming revolution.

Coyle and Chaffer actually veer towards a Menshevik stagist approach (a position to the right of the South African Communist Party which is at least formally committed to the Leninist theory of uninterrupted revolution). In spite of this, the attempt of these two to actually take up the ideological cudgels at all is very healthy. It allows ideas to flourish and develop in their most natural habitat – polemical exchange.

By far the best article in this issue of *Young Communist* is the piece by John Black, "Eurocommunism and the vanguard party". Black makes some good points against the Euros, and although the article sometimes smacks a little of being a too formal repetition of the generalised truths of Leninist party organisation, it is a quite effective and workmanlike job.

... And therein lies its problem. These are the seeds of future division within the CPB. The more the Youth Section lays hold of the basic tools and ideas of Leninism, the more the glaring contradiction between these principles and the politics and practice of the CPB becomes apparent.

For example, Black correctly points out that economism is characterised not so much by the denial of the importance of the political struggle, "but rather [by the trailing] of the spontaneity of the working class movement". Now tell us, comrade Black – have you ever read the *Morning Star*, the paper that you and all CPBers are constitutionally bound to sell?

We would say that it is an outstanding example of the very sort of problem you describe – economism. What would you say?

Take, for example, the miners strike. Can John Black, can any Youth Section supporter, remember a single demand raised by the *Star* in the course of that strategic

twelve month struggle that had not been previously formulated by the leadership of the NUM? No, neither can we.

Black is quite right when he says that: "The miners' strike illustrated that trade union struggle can be a school for educating workers ... But without a vanguard party, working class anger can never be translated into effective struggle against the capitalist class." A thousand times true.

Black is clearly an honest communist who wants to build a genuine Communist Party. He correctly points out that "central to Lenin's concept of the party ... was the role of professional revolutionaries ... professional revolutionaries are indispensable to the building and work of the vanguard party." We agree. But does the leadership of his CPB? Hardly.

It has a part time general secretary in the shape of Mike Hicks and a part time approach to politics. If the comrades of the CPB Youth Section take themselves at all seriously as revolutionaries, they must fight to unite theory with practice. When they do they will find their natural home is with the comrades of *The Leninist*, not with the sleepy reformists of the CPB.

WH – former member of the YCL General Council

## Tumbledown

*Tumbledown* Director, Richard Eyre BBC1, May 31 1988

IT IS A measure of the quality of this film that it came through the extraordinary hype built up prior to its showing unscathed. The producer Richard Broke's previous work, *The Monocled Mutineer*, also created a great deal of controversy over its authenticity, but a difference this time is that so much has been said about the film even prior to its showing. This reached its most ludicrous level with Tory MP Sir George Young's statement that he hadn't seen it, but he knew it was 'complete fiction'.

In fact, even before filming began, the growls from the right about the BBC daring to present any view of the Falklands War other than the official 'rejoicing', started to make themselves heard. The fact that the BBC had dropped the making of another film, *The Falklands Play* by Ian Curteis, increased their wrath. That film reflected the government's position and even had a scene with Thatcher in tears over her boys.

The BBC made life difficult for itself by dithering over a decision on *The Falklands Play* and not stating clearly that the reason for its decommissioning was not so much political as due to the fact that it was just not good work, which anyone can discover by a glance at the published text.

Curteis then joined forces with the *Sunday Express* and various rabid right Tory MPs to hound those behind the making of *Tumbledown* and the BBC in general. They accused the BBC of stabbing the British public in the back and said they were filming in secret. The day these accusations appeared in the *Sunday Express*, the crew and actors on *Tumbledown* were on location in the middle of Oxford surrounded by American tourists!

The making of *Tumbledown* has undoubtedly been used as an excuse to bash the BBC, but this is only part of the story. This needs to be pointed out to the RCP, whose review of the film (in *ms*) does not see beyond the superficial

fuss. Its inability to understand the significance of this film shines through in the opening remarks that *Tumbledown* excited "any controversy at all is a measure of the political pressure now bearing upon British television." The review was obviously written and printed prior to the real build up of arguments about the film, but even that shows lack of judgement on the importance of the film and its subject matter.

The Falklands War has a pivotal position in British history, a last gasp of glory for the empire. Its significance stems not from the battle itself or the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands/Malvinas. In narrow economic terms it was obviously blind madness. Very apt are the lines from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which read: "To gain a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name" and "To fight for a plot which is not tomb enough or continent to hide the slain."

Its importance was two fold. First, it reasserted Britain's imperialist standing. Second, and perhaps most importantly it facilitated Thatcher's second general election victory and cleared the way for the battle against the 'enemy within', which continues to this day and shows little sign of being stemmed, certainly given the quality of our 'generals'.

The misgivings of some sections of the ruling class about Thatcher's bellicose approach, epitomised by the war, have resurfaced with *Tumbledown*. What lies at the root of tensions within the ruling class today can broadly be said to be the fact that Britain is at a crossroads.

It is no longer a world power in its own right, but it still maintains a very prominent 'special relationship' with the USA (without which it could not have beaten the Argentinians). In the medium to long term there is a contradiction between this and the aim of playing a leading role in the emerging Western European imperialist bloc. In this context the Falklands War reflects Britain's past not its future. It was not the act of a European power but a world power.

The significance of the war as a focus of these different views will reflect itself in culture, and Neil Ascherson of the *Observer* is right when he says there are worries about *Tumbledown* opening the floodgates and being the first of many works on the Falklands War.

The way in which the press have been forced through demand/competition to take up Robert Lawrence's story has shown the futility of attempts to put the lid on the Falklands. From the *Observer's* serialisation of the book to the *Mirror's* 'Hotline for Falklands victims' to the *Sun's* 'pull-out special' the war is again making the

news. While weighty editorials have been written in the 'quality' papers, only the *Daily Mail* has really shown out and out hatred for the film, with its screaming headlines, condemnation of the film by selected relatives of the dead and injured. It even had a phone-in, which predicably declared 3-1 vote against even showing the film.

As for the film itself, it certainly was a powerful piece of television. It would be wrong to look for merely an attack on Thatcher and her decision to launch the war. True the characters at the heart of the ruling class, for instance, Lawrence and his father, are 'old style' Tories who may not be particularly fond of Thatcher; she has lowered the tone of the party. But this did not lead them to oppose giving the Argies what they deserved.

*Tumbledown's* strength comes from writer Charles Wood's finding a form to match the content of the film. The use of flashback and merging of various themes which all have their culmination and explanation in the final moment when Lawrence is hit by a shell, is complex but always clear. The only thread which does not fully succeed is that which Wood describes as "Bergen Man", a mythical view of the perfect soldier, what Lawrence aspired to, as he undoubtedly loved the life of a soldier. This black and white sequence started very dramatically but seemed to lose its meaning and effect somewhere along the way.

Richard Eyre, the film's director, said his aim was to look at the role of the soldier and the ways that war draws those related or connected to the soldier into its vortex. One could criticise that the film gives a one sided view, concerning itself only with the officers, but there is no attempt to give Robert Lawrence a rosy glow, despite the *Express* finding 'shades of Douglas Bader' in it.

This avoidance of overt sympathy with the central character, something many may have looked on as a fault is due to Colin Firth's brilliant portrayal of Lawrence. He brings out the characteristics one would expect of the Hooray Henry that Lawrence obviously was, sheltered by his public school, Guards officer and Chelsea wine bar lifestyle.

Many have looked on *Tumbledown* as an anti-war film, a general pacifist statement, but it is much more a story of what happens when, as the *Financial Times* critic describes it, "the middle classes are confronted by commonplace bureaucratic insensitivity", something the unemployed are more than used to, but which the "golden-labrador-owning classes may, if they are lucky, never have to confront in all their lives."

G Kyle

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**The Labour right is on the offensive. Kinnock has moved to block further left challenges to his leadership. Edmonds attacks Benn for not wooing the yuppie voters. The TGWU decision to wait and see does little to help Benn and Heffer. They are fighting back using the distinctly tatty-looking nostrums of 1940s left reformism**

## The Labour left: Part of the problem

**A**CCORDING to the high Tory *Economist* of May 28, "once Mr Benn has been soundly beaten, Labour's main hope seems to be that the British electorate might swing to fudge". In fact, the elements of 'fudge' in Labour's platform has decreased markedly over the recent period.

In the aftermath of Labour's disastrous results in the general election last year, Kinnock commissioned seven review groups to overhaul policies on taxation and benefits, employment, the economy and industry, social services and the NHS, the physical and social environment, civil liberties and individual rights and foreign relations. The perspectives coming out of these committees are all short on detail, but then they were never intended to produce firm policies for this year's conference.

Instead, they were designed to consolidate the rightist platform that Kinnock and Hattersley drafted earlier this year and to rehash the party's policies in its spirit.

The seven reports passed easily through the NEC of the Labour Party. Because he knows that the 'new realist' positions could be made into an article of faith by Kinnock and used to purge the left (and not just *Militant*), Benn has damned them as:

**"superficial and shallow in their analysis, extremely weak and vague in their remedies. They point unmistakably towards the acceptance of many of the changes made by the Tories since they have been in power ..."**

Very true.

Leaving aside the bluster so characteristic of social democrats, Roy Hattersley was recently quoted in the *Independent* as saying:

**"Labour had reached ... a year of destiny as well of decision. The party's review now under way had to produce a breakthrough ..."**

And this had to be a breakthrough for the right. Hattersley recognises a fundamental crisis of identity which is afflicting Labour. His wing, the right, is responding by trying to steal the clothes of Thatcher. In the light of the Tories' three successive general election victories, Kinnock's cabal is attempting to Thatcherise Labour.

Speaking on May 17, Bryan Gould unambiguously accepted the permanence of the redrafting of the political agenda achieved by Thatcher. His only gripe against it appeared to be that it was not willing or able to move with the times:

**"It may be that the Conservative Party has dominated the '80s. Perhaps some of its destruction of the economic consensus and structures of the '60s and '70s was necessary even if done in the most damaging way. Yet they are beginning to look distinctly old**

**fashioned. Thatcherism is not a philosophy for the '90s."**

Gould concedes the rest of this decade to the Tories and tries to present the Labour Party as the best bet for the coming one. Only the degree of worship of the market and the promotion of "individual choice" now distinguishes the Labour Party's centre/right majority from Thatcher's troops. Significantly, Kinnock's policy reviews have dropped even the pretence of the struggle for 'socialism'.

Explicitly, state intervention in the economy is no longer being touted as a step towards 'socialism' but, as Gould puts it, necessary in order merely to "consciously remedy market deficiencies".

In reply to this the left, as exemplified by the doomed to fail Benn/Heffer leadership campaign, is taking refuge in the tired, distinctly tatty-looking nostrums of demand management which formed the bedrock of their 'socialism' in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. The T&GWU's wait and see position will not snatch victory for Benn and Heffer, nor will it stop Labour's shift to the right.

The fact of the matter is that the Tories, under their class war general Thatcher, have effectively destroyed the old consensus that dominated the postwar British political scene and created a new one: not between classes but certainly within bourgeois culture: this is the significance of Thatcherism.

The Conservative Party has shifted to the right, shed vestigial traces of Butskellism and launched its singleminded crusade to reorganise and streamline British imperialism primarily at the expense of the bottom and middle layers of the working class. Labour and the centre parties have, in their different ways, adapted to the new consensus.

Labourism, almost by definition, is consensus politics. It is a bourgeois party of the working class. In other words it accepts the dominant ideas in society — and, of course, in bourgeois society bourgeois ideas are dominant. And there can be little doubt that for all its eccentricities Thatcher's new consensus reflects the socio/economic interests of British capitalism.

The abandonment by the Tories — the preferred party of the bourgeoisie — of the old consensus inevitably precipitated a crisis in the Labour Party. The right, which usually has the initiative, has sought to bring the party into line with the new consensus. It has had to do this if it was ever going to be regarded as a safe alternative party of government by bourgeois opinion. This is clearly the impetus that propels the Labour leadership to the right and underpins Gould's adulation of Thatcher's achievements.

It is in this context that we should view the local elections

back in early May which saw Labour gain some 104 seats. Frankly, this was neither the fruits of revamped Labourism nor the result of a polarisation of classes in Britain, as the WRP (*News Line*) creditously suggested at the time.

Labour's gains were made due to the collapse of the LSD Alliance. Labour's percentage share of the vote did not skyrocket. The Tories gained 5 seats while Owen's SDP was totally humiliated and the Liberal Democrats suffered 63 losses. Given the dire political and organisational shambles of the SDP/LDP at the moment, it is not possible to draw particularly profound conclusions from the local election results. It was only to be expected that Labour would stage a marginal recovery.

Nonetheless, recent developments have in fact underlined our analysis that the Labour Party has reverted to its pre-1945 role of a party of crisis — it is no longer the alternative, let alone natural, party of government — which would be placed in office by the bourgeoisie to push through attacks on the working class that the bosses cannot implement directly through a Tory government, for fear of provoking a major backlash.

If there were a major slip-up by the Thatcher regime at home or abroad, then there is indeed a good chance that a Labour Party with a 'Thatnockite' new consensus ideology would get into office. (The left would only be put in if the class struggle took a qualitative leap forward — it would be used to stop a revolution).

It might be expected that the pathetic adaptation to Thatcherism by Labour's right wing would be the ideal opportunity for left social democracy to step into the breach and fulfil the dream that socialists in the party have had since it was founded: to win it for 'socialism'.

The fact is that the problems of the right exacerbate the crisis of direction and identity that the left were embroiled in anyway. Why is this? Why do the likes of Benn, Heffer, *Militant* etc, have no ability to steal the initiative from the right and boldly strike out for 'socialism'?

The impossibility of this is to be found in the very nature of left reformism itself. Although right reformism tails bourgeois opinion, this does at least give it the advantage of having a solid material base for its ideology, ie bourgeois ideology, which is the dominant ideology in society. On this basis, the Labour right can appeal to 'common sense' and win the votes of millions of ordinary people (average workers).

The left, on the other hand, lacks a solid social ideology. It appeals to militant workers, but its ideas are thoroughly utopian. Take its definition of 'socialism' and how it is achieved. Socialism is, of course, the first stage of com-

munist. It does not evolve gradually out of capitalism but through proletarian revolution and the imposition of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yet, for left social democracy, 'socialism' will be ushered in by the progressive reform of a stable and prosperous bourgeois state. Nationalisation is meant to represent the gradual encroachment of 'socialism' on capitalist property and power. Life does not work like this. The burgeoning crisis of British imperialism has totally discredited left reformism's utopian plans.

In the face of this, the left has either retreated into pious head-in-the-sandism à la Eric Heffer and repeated *ad nauseum* the shop worn reformist make-believes of yesteryear; or, like Tony Benn, attempted to revamp the policies of old to present some sort of counter-weight to Kinnock's 'revisionist' zeal. As Peter Kellner wrote in the *Independent* of May 30:

**"However bleak Mr Benn's short-term prospects may be, the only chance the left has of ever recovering the ground it has lost in recent years is to show that it has its own modern, coherent view of socialism to set against Mr Kinnock's ... Mr Benn and his followers must answer: what would you do instead?"**

Good question, Peter. In response, Tony bounced back with a quite remarkable article the next day in the same paper, junking the operative model that he and generations of left reformists have taken as their starting point in the past. Explicitly, he attacked what he chose to call the "Stalinism" of the post war Attlee Labour government, despite the fact that he has often upheld the 1945 Labour manifesto as an example of how 'socialist' policies win elections. Now, however, he is at pains to distance himself from that tradition:

**"After the last world war when our economy had been nearly ruined, the Labour government was compelled to use the mechanism of central planning to rebuild our industrial base ... but the resulting statism bore more than a little resemblance to Stalinism".**

This presumably is the basis of "the outline of a new and very different politics that may emerge in the 1990s and beyond" that Benn wrote about in the introduction to his recently launched new book, *Fighting Back*. Yet these "different politics" are defined almost purely in the negative: Benn distances himself from the discredited model of bureaucratic 'socialism' — in reality Keynesian demand management of the capitalist economy — that has constituted the staple fare of the Labour Party since World War II.

Yet what does he offer in its place? Peter Kellner again: "... search in Mr Benn's writings for

**his blueprint of a socialist society, and you will search in vain."**

Quite. The crisis of capitalism is exposing Benn and his ilk for what they have always been in reality: left liberal bourgeois bleeding hearts and constitutionalist tinkers. Who can really envisage the likes of these people leading a tough single-minded fight against the Tories? What militant can now see them leading the British working class to socialism? Any takers? No, we thought not ...

The fact of the matter is that for all the huff and puff of people like Benn, for all the heat and fury, the relationship between left and right reformism is in the last analysis symbiotic rather than antagonistic. The right, under normal conditions, needs the left to ensure the loyalty of the militant working class. This is what the left's utopian 'socialism' is all about. The left, on the other hand, rely on the right to present the party's 'reasonable' face to the ruling class: to assure the bourgeoisie that their system is safe with Labour.

Without the right, the Labour Party simply would never be placed in power in the normal course of events. Thus the rationale for the organisation, as a parliamentary party of social reform, would be effectively undermined and working class militants would be hard to dissuade from finding a revolutionary outlet for their grievances.

The advent of the new harsh realities of the '80s have thrown both wings of social democracy into crisis. The needs of a British imperialism in the conditions of a drift towards a new general crisis of capitalism have necessitated the destruction of the Butskellite consensus of the '50s and '60s and the creation of a new set of ('Victorian') values. This has gone hand in hand with a far more confrontationalist and aggressive approach by the ruling class — something which leaves the reformist left looking like Rip van Winkles. And, for all their 'class struggle' rhetoric, the reformist left has shown that it does not have any answers for (real) life outside the hallowed chambers of parliament.

Only a fool would dismiss the left/right struggle in the Labour Party as irrelevant. Nothing important will happen in Britain without profound developments in the Labour Party. Nonetheless, as we have shown, the Labour left and right are not part of the answer but part of the problem. We need new leaders, not the choice between sermonising Labourite lefts and Thatcher look-alikes currently on offer in the Labour Party. We need class war generals: we need a genuine Communist Party.

Ian Mahoney



# **Unemployed** — — — — — **ORGANISER**

Paper of the Unemployed Workers Charter  
Price: £1 employed, 2p wageless

## **Lobby the TUC — September 5**



- No TUC support for ETP 'workfare'!
- Support the TGWU, Nupe, Nalgo boycott!
- Organise the unemployed!

# **UWC**

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS CHARTER

■ For details write to UWC, Box 928, London WC1N 3XX or phone (01) 431 3135



## Lobby the TUC BOYCOTT EPT 'WORKFARE'

THE unemployed are being hit harder in the 1980s than at any time since the 'great depression' of the 1930s. Then the unemployed were able to fight back — because they were **ORGANISED**!

Because we are not **ORGANISED** are are wide open to attacks today. Already this year we have seen the introduction of the inappropriately named 'Income Support'. This is, in effect, a *cut* in benefit for the unemployed. We have also had cuts in Housing Benefit which will lead to thousands more unemployed workers being made homeless. And things are going to get worse ...

This September the Tories are introducing what is known as the Employment Training Programme, a copy of the US Workfare — work for your dole — scheme. The only way the unemployed can fight back is to **ORGANISE**!

The Labour Party leaders have blustered about it in parliament, but will do no more than talk. As to the TUC it has actually decided to work with this slave labour scheme. It did not want to "desert the unemployed" said its general secretary Norman Willis. To get TUC support the government gave 'certain concessions' — they are worthless to the unemployed.

We say the TUC has not only deserted the unemployed, it has stabbed us in the back. Without its cooperation ETP would have collapsed, and that would have been an excellent thing. We say *real jobs with real pay, not work for your dole and fake 'training'*

That is why the Unemployed Workers Charter is organising a lobby of the TUC's congress in Bournemouth on September 5. This is not only the first day of the TUC but the day ETP will be launched.

We will be demanding that the TUC follows the lead of the TGWU, Nupe and Nalco which have voted to boycott EPT. This is no hopeless cause. The TUC voted to cooperate with the ETP by 19 to 14. The right wing led GMB swayed the TUC to vote for it, but because of rank and file pressure within its own ranks, the GMB has 'workfare' under 'review' until December, when it will make a definite decision on the matter.

This shows that there is rank and file opposition within the unions to this scheme. We want to unite with that opposition and fight back against this.

This is what the UWC lobby of the TUC is all about. It is the start of a campaign to **SMASH** ETP and to **ORGANISE** the unemployed. So, whether you are employed or unemployed, you should get involved in this fight. As long as we are isolated and demoralised we will be picked off and defeated by the Tories. But we can start to organise against this *now*.

The Tories and their ETP can be defeated. They are not invincible, despite the collapse of the Labour Party and trade union leaderships. **UNITED** unemployed and employed workers can win — if we are **ORGANISED** around a fighting platform.

The UWC has such a platform, and it is the only campaign fighting for such an organisation. Fight with the UWC for your rights and the rights of all workers. Join us in Bournemouth on September 5. The fight back starts here. **ORGANISE**!

- Boycott EPT 'Workfare'!
- Real jobs with real pay!
- Organise the Unemployed!

I would like to become a supporter of the UWC ☐

I would like to join the UWC Lobby of the TUC on September 5 ☐

Send to: UWC, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (01) 431 3135

# EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED UNITE!

THE **TORIES** aren't good for anything. But one thing they can do is divide and rule. Whether it be turning workers of different unions against each other, or men against women, gay against straight or black against white, they have tried it and they often succeed.



• The workers ...

They also try and turn employed and unemployed workers against each other. In this way they weaken us all.

The threat of unemployment has been used to force the employed to accept lower wage levels and poorer conditions. "If you're not prepared to work for this amount", say the bosses, "then there's plenty on the dole who will".



Likewise fake 'training' schemes — first introduced under the last Labour government as the 'Youth Opportunity Programme' — have also been used by bosses to drive down wages. Unfortunately the leaders of the trade union movement have in the main collaborated with almost every 'training' scheme. Now thanks to the TUC unemployed workers are to be 'employed' on the production line, or wherever, for their benefit. This does nothing to help employed or unemployed workers.

The UWC is out to stop all this. We can **UNITE** employed and unemployed workers. Indeed we must if we are ever to see anything

but defeats. And that unity has been achieved in places, from both sides of the fence.

Many workers who will be asked to oversee the Tories' ETP, from this September on, are already organising against this slave labour scheme. The TGWU Community Programme Shop Stewards Combine has organised a campaign and demonstration against this 'workfare' scheme, the UWC supported its demonstration on June 15, in Sheffield.

The potential for such resistance among employed unionised workers to the attacks on the unemployed is growing.

Over the last year there have been a rash of disputes in the union of unemployment benefit and social security office workers, the CPSA. There were strikes in many offices against the merger of Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices, which, when brought in, will mean both a loss in jobs among these workers and a still more inefficient service for the



• ... United ...

unemployed in dealing with their claims.

We backed this struggle through active solidarity. We brought our supporters down to the picket lines to stand alongside the striking workers, arguing through with other unemployed workers why the strikers should be supported.

This is the way forward.

The Tories were trying to turn the unemployed against the striking CPSA members, to blame them for not receiving their benefit. Rubbish we said.

The government — both local and national — had deliberately obstructed payment to create friction between employed and unemployed. In fact, by not striking all the CPSA members would have

ensured was a growth in the unemployment queues, through layoffs of their own members, and with less workers on the other side of the screens to deal with them.

By supporting the strike on the picket lines, and by showing who the real enemy of the unemployed was, by fighting for town hall occupations for emergency council pay-



ments, the UWC showed exactly how the unity of employed and unemployed workers can be achieved, against the Tories, the bosses and their system.

It is their system which is the problem, not 'greedy workers'. We won't fall for their lies. We will fight back by **ORGANISING**.

By **ORGANISING** we can ensure that the unemployed are not used as cheap labour against the employed, or, worse, as strike-breakers. We will also have an organised voice to demand active support from the trade unions in defence of the living standards and rights of the employed. **ORGANISED** we will have the power to **FIGHT BACK**.

If we are **ORGANISED** then both employed and unemployed are strong. If not, then we are all losers.

The UWC is a campaign to **ORGANISE** the unemployed. This is the way forward. This is the way to win.



• ... will never be defeated



## Why I'm going



A black and white portrait of a young man with dark, curly hair. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. He is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

**MALCOLM:** From my experience, the thing that the unemployed desperately need is *organisation*. That's why I'm joining the lobby in Bournemouth. The Tories have been able to get away with the attacks on the unemployed, and the official labour movement has been able to get away with doing nothing to defend them, only because the unemployed have no fighting organisation of their own. And it seems to me that building such an organisation is what the UWC is all about.

- Organise the unemployed. Unemployed workers must have the right to join trade unions; unemployed workers groups to be represented on trades councils; a National Unemployed Workers' Movement to have a seat on the TUC.



# Blast from the past

## An interview with Jack Dash

**Jack Dash is honorary president of the UWC. He is perhaps best known as the leading rank and file docker in the port of London. But back in the '30s, he was a member of the National Unemployed Workers Movement. We talked to him about those times and what we can learn from them today**

**Could you tell our readers what it was like being unemployed in the 1930s?**

I was unemployed in the 'hungry '30s', when there was over two million unemployed, which was a lot then. In those days you had to prove that you were unemployed by signing on at the labour exchange three times a week. On many occasions, if you were only a few minutes late, you would lose your signing and your money.

The civil servants then were not as enlightened as they are today. They had a different attitude to you entirely. If you were unemployed, you were like dirt.

**Did the unemployed react to this?**

Of course! Once there was a big battle as a result of someone coming in late when the clerk refused to allow him to sign, so the man lost his head, reached over the counter and tried to strangle him.

The phones went and the local police came in. And a real fight started, with all the unemployed there ready to get into a real kicking. Then one of the unemployed, Patsy Hicks, a member of the Communist Party, got hold of the police inspector and told him 'quieten down and back off, otherwise there's going to be a real riot here'. So they got hold of the manager of the labour exchange, the clerk and the lad who had lost his head, and the whole thing was ironed out.

**How were the unemployed politicised?**

The unemployed were there to be seen in those days. There could be a queue of 500, all waiting to sign up. Then the left was far more active. On one day you would have a public platform put up by the queue and the Labour Party would get up and explain to you why you were unemployed, giving you the politics of it. And perhaps the next day, or the day after that, you'd have the Communist Party explaining the reason.

Then a member of the NUWM would get up and speak, and spread the idea that you mustn't allow yourself to be cheap labour because you were unemployed, and in return for that, trade unionists would take up whatever your demands were in terms of relief or for employment. So the unemployed and the NUWM built up a rapport, and many of the unemployed became part of the NUWM.

**Can you tell us about the sort day-to-day of militant actions the NUWM organised?**

The NUWM organised many marches and demonstrations. For example they took a coffin to Downing Street; they marched from Trafalgar Square one evening, with candles and with the coffin draped. It was all done in a solemn manner and, of course, when people saw it, they just stood there, raised their hats and many of them followed the march until it got interfered with by the police when they saw what was happening. The slogan was 'he died of unemployment'.

On another occasion, when the NUWM was fighting for winter relief, we all lay down in the snow in our thousands, pulling the posters over ourselves so that the slogans could be read. You can just imagine how we

held the traffic up, for miles and miles! As fast as the police picked us up, we lay down again. It created tremendous chaos.

Another time the NUWM marched to the Ritz hotel, which at that time was the wealthiest hotel in London. So, we had our placards and we marched into the grill of the Ritz hotel, and we all sat down. But we made a mistake, and that was that Pwe should have gone in the evening instead of the afternoon because the grill was not open.

But, nevertheless, we invaded it and took all the seats. If it had been in the evening, we'd have been among all the customers. But it still had an impact. We sat down and pulled out our posters demanding relief and the manager of the hotel came over and asked who



• Jack Dash – vital lessons from the past

was the spokesman and wanted to know what was going on.

So we told him that we had just come in for a cup of tea. He said, 'but you don't usually come here'. We said we knew that, but they didn't usually come down to Aldgate when they came slumming, but they still came. And they were courteously received.

Then our spokesman got up onto the stage of the grill and spelled it all out about unemployment, with all the waiters standing round nodding their heads at what he was saying. We refused to go until we were served; the manager refused to serve us, in fact he called the police. They came in to evict us, so we started shouting our slogans. As we were

being turfed out, we got a collection from the waiters.

We always made sure the press knew what we were doing. They loved it, because we always made good press for the papers. There was always something going on – marches, demonstration, always something happening. We sent speakers to the trade union branches to ask for their help, which we often got.

**Were you in a position where you could help those in work with solidarity actions?**

Well, our main solidarity was that we wouldn't allow the unemployed to be used as cheap labour.

**What lessons do the 1930s and the NUWM have for us in the UWC today?**

As I said, the unemployed were there to be seen, which isn't really the case today. That's a great disadvantage to us, and a big advantage to the ruling class. That's a lesson that we've got to learn: that the unemployed have got to make themselves seen and heard. We were visible, and we were always agitating back in the '30s.

**One argument we hear a lot is that things are different today, that you can't organise the unemployed like in the '20s and '30s because the unemployed have no experience of organisation. What do you think of that?**

If there's mass unemployment, how is that so different? If it's any different, it's different because the figure is *bigger than in the '30s*.

**How do you think the UWC can go forward?**

Its publicity you want, like your picket of the TUC. They've got to receive you, no back door stuff. There needs to be a building up of contacts between the employed and unemployed workers. But we can't fight a war without soldiers, and we've got to go out and win them among the unemployed.

Certainly, we need to link up with every local branch of the trade union movement. Also, build contacts with other towns where they have unemployed centres. Liverpool, in particular, has an excellent one. Let's see what can be done with the NUM, with the victimised miners. If we start from there, we can begin to build our army.

I'd like to see a demonstration with the organised movement marching with you against unemployment. What we must try to do is to bring politics into the whole struggle, because the struggle is political.

Yes, there is a strong current within various campaigns around unemployment at the moment that wants to disassociate itself from politics, on the grounds that it drives people away. But unemployment is politics, isn't it?

## Battle Plan for the

## Lobby

THIS IS our 'battle plan' for the UWC's lobby of the TUC. If you can help with any aspect of the organisation of this action, get in touch!

• We have a send off rally/concert at Culross Hall, Culross Buildings, Battlebridge Road, London N1 (behind Kings Cross station). Starts at 7.30pm on Sunday, September 4 ... music, comedy and refreshments.

• We want as many people to join us on our lobby in Bournemouth as possible. The places on the coach are free for the unemployed, £5 each for the employed.

• This year, the TUC is meeting in The International Centre, Exeter Road, Bournemouth BH2 5BH. We will be lobbying from 8.30am. Make sure you join us on time. We are trying to sort out accommodation – so if you need a floor for Sunday night contact us.

• We have a fringe meeting at Tralee Hotel, West Hill Road from 12 noon. Invited

speakers for this include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Jack Dash the famous dockers leader, veteran of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s and Honorary Chairman of the UWC and a Dover NUS striker.

• We already have over 5,000 signatures on our petition to the TUC demanding they withdraw their support from the Tories' ETP – we are aiming for 20,000 – so get busy now and get some petition forms from us.

• Trade unionists – get your union branch to sponsor the lobby and invite a speaker from the UWC to explain our case.

**The UWC is at full stretch over this period. Whether your unemployed or employed we need your help. If you want a real fightback against the Tories attacks on the unemployed, join the UWC. Write or ring: we look forward to hearing from you!**

## Past Lessons

THE UWC stands in the tradition of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 30s. The NUWM was set up in 1921 under the leadership of Wal Hannington. The NUWM organised up to 100,000 in its ranks. It fought long and hard and in the end successfully for the rights of the unemployed.

Definitely the most famous actions organised by the NUWM were the Hunger Marches. Six were held between 1922 and 1936. Members of the NUWM were admitted after swearing this oath:

"I, a member of the great army of the unemployed, being without work and compelled to suffer through no fault of my own, do hereby abide by, and carry out, the instructions of the NUWM, with the deliberate intention of pressing forward the claims of

the unemployed so that no man, woman or child suffers hunger or want ...

"Further, realising that only by the abolition of this hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst, I here and now take myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife against this system until capitalism is abolished from our country and all its resources truly belong to the people."

Like the UWC, the NUWM was not a respectable organisation. It staged factory raids to stop excessive overtime. It occupied buildings from which to organise the unemployed. It united unemployed workers with organised workers in struggle – not least in 1926 when the NUWM was among the most steadfast allies of the heroic miners.